Joseph of Nazareth as Man and Father in Jerónimo Gracián's Summary of the Excellencies of St Joseph (1597)

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JOSEPH OF NAZARETH AS MAN AND FATHER IN JERÓNIMO GRACIÁN’S
SUMMARY OF THE EXCELLENCIES OF ST JOSEPH (1597)

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Notre Dame Australia

10th November, 2016
Declaration of Authorship

Use 'thesis' (doctoral or full research masters)
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the representation of St Joseph as man, father and holy exemplar found in Jerónimo Gracián’s Summary of the Excellencies of St Joseph, published in Rome in 1597. The Summary is dedicated to the Venerable Archconfraternity of St Joseph of the Carpenters and is regarded as one of the most influential and comprehensive Josephine texts to date. The work consists of three integral and interconnected elements: Gracián’s text, six episodes of Joseph’s life completed by engraver Christophorus Blancus, and accompanying Latin epigrams (or mottos) composed by Francisco de Cabrera Moral. The Summary has enjoyed popularity as a devotional text, and its engravings and epigrams have been the subject of recent art historical scholarship, initiated and contributed to significantly by Fr Joseph F. Chorpenning.

Chorpenning clearly identifies a comparison between the Summary’s integration of text, image and epigram with the classic sixteenth-century emblem, stating that the Summary’s engravings “function as emblems”.¹ With each chapter taking one engraving as its focus, this study uses visual analysis to clarify the precise nature of the Summary’s emblematic function and its purpose in specifically communicating Joseph’s masculinity, fatherhood and saintliness. This visual analysis is strongly informed by Joseph’s more traditional portrayal in Scripture, apocryphal writings, patristic and devotional literature, and relevant artistic depictions related to the Summary’s own historical context. The study ultimately explores how effectively the Summary presents Joseph as a practical model of masculine, fatherly and saintly ideals to its original confraternal audience.

This thesis approaches Joseph as a subject in his own right, not simply as a subsidiary associate of the Virgin Mary or as an aspect of the feminine. In doing so, it brings into full relief an exemplary yet often marginalised figure. Additionally, it affirms the significance of the Summary’s engravings both to the work as a whole and within the context of the Josephine cult. The effective emblematic collaboration within the Summary allows the masculine and fatherly Joseph to take centre stage, and offers a tangible means by which these attributes are communicated to the Summary’s original and contemporary audiences.

The friendship, generosity and guidance of a great number of people made this work possible. Thanks to my supervisors, Dr Karen McCluskey and Sr Moira Debono, RSM, who stuck with me and Joe, and to Georgina Ledvinka, Assistant Dean, Mrs Cathy Costa, and all faculty members who have offered encouragement and guidance. I am also grateful to the University for their generous provision of a postgraduate scholarship to support me during my research.

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Thanks to Monsignor La Rosa of the church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami, Padre Tullio Locatelli of the Giuseppini del Murialdo, and Dottorressa Gabriella Romani at Biblioteca Vallicelliana, who enabled me to access essential resources, especially Gracián’s Summary. Thanks to Dottore Andrea Zonca in Bergamo for providing me with the reproductions of Blancus’ engravings included in this thesis. Special thanks to Stefania Colafranceschi, who so generously accompanied me to what felt like every church in Rome, introduced me to pecorino gelato, and put up ever so graciously with my stumbling Italian.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Sumario de las Excelencias del Glorioso S. Joseph, Esposo de la Virgen Maria* (Summary of the Excellencies of St Joseph, Husband of the Virgin Mary) is a treatise written by the Spanish Carmelite friar Jerónimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios (1545-1614) and published in Rome in 1597.¹ The *Summary*’s contents, context and purpose have been brought to light through the work of Fr Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S.F.S., who describes Gracián’s work as the most comprehensive Josephine devotional text to date,² and notes that it continues to be regarded as a reliable and orthodox historical and iconographic source of events in the life of St Joseph and of the Holy Family.³

The context, content and purpose of the *Summary* is better understood and appreciated through knowing the particular circumstances of Gracián’s life. Born into a large family with important political connections, at the age of fifteen Gracián studied law and theology at the University of Alcalá and was ordained a priest.⁴ While thinking seriously of joining the Jesuits in Alcalá, Gracián encountered the Carmelite nuns of the Teresian reform, who gave him a copy of Teresa’s constitutions; he studied them and entered the Carmelite novitiate in 1572, at the age of twenty-seven.⁵ Known for his charismatic and energetic personality, Gracián soon became

¹ Jerónimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios, *Sumario de las Excelencias del Glorioso S. Joseph, Esposo de la Virgen Maria*. Rome: Antonio Zannetti, 1597. This work is hereafter referred to through the thesis as “the *Summary*”. This thesis cites a copy of the original 1597 Spanish edition of the *Summary*, held at the Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome. It also cites an Italian translation which, according to the *imprimatur*, was published at the same time as the original Spanish and is held by the Oratory of St Joseph in Montréal. (*Sommaio dell’Eccellenze del Glorioso S. Giosef, Sposo della Vergine Maria*. Translated by Sulpicio Mancini. Rome: Luigi Zannetti, 1597.) Both copies were viewed by me in 2015. In the footnotes, distinctions are made between the Spanish original (“Sumario”) and the Italian translation (“Sommaio”) to identify from which edition particular material has been sourced.

² Joseph F. Chorpenning, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ: an anthology of readings from Jerónimo Gracián’s *Summary* of the Excellencies of St Joseph* (1597) (Philadelphia: St Joseph’s University Press, 1993): 21. Chorpenning writes (*Just Man*, 1993: 20) that the *Summary* has seen twenty-seven editions, printed in Spanish, Italian, French and German, that most of the editions published prior to Gracián’s death were overseen by the author, and the final edition to have been corrected by Gracián himself (the 1609 Brussels edition) is considered its definitive version.

³ In his *Art of Painting*, which was published posthumously in 1649, Francisco Pacheco consistently cites the *Summary* in his description of how scenes from the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph should be depicted visually. Francisco Pacheco, *Arte de la pintura: su antiguedad y grandezas* (Seville: Simon Faxardo, 1649): especially 494-528; Joseph F. Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 3.


⁵ The Carmelite reform was instigated by St Teresa, who established her monastery of San José in Ávila in 1562. In her foundation she wanted to achieve the specific intention of forming a small community of enclosed Carmelite women committed to supporting one another and fostering a vocation of intense contemplation and prayer for the Church. Gracián essentially met the Carmelites by accident, mistakenly going to their convent instead of to the Franciscans, where he was to celebrate Mass. After reading the constitutions, he wrote to Teresa, whom he had never met. For Teresa’s reform, see Payne, *The Carmelite Tradition*, 2011: 64. For
Teresa’s close friend, advisor and “spiritual father”. This relationship saw Gracián’s abrupt rise in the order, and he assumed several important positions before being elected the first provincial of the Discalced Carmelites in 1581. His strong support for Teresa, and his focus on continuing Teresian reform, sparked opposition and in February 1592 he was expelled from the Carmelite order.

In 1597, Gracián found himself in Rome after years of struggle to implement Teresian reform, his expulsion from the Carmelite order in 1592, and a two-year period as a captive under Turkish corsairs. After he was freed, he travelled to Rome seeking reinstatement as a Carmelite. It was there that he wrote the Summary at the behest of Fray Pedro Juan de Zaragoza, whom he titles as socio, or assistant, to the Master of the Sacred Palace of St Peter’s. The Master of the Sacred Palace, who was always a member of the Dominican order, held the role of the Pope’s “official theologian” and also held the right to examine every book or print


7 During his novitiate, Teresa requested Gracián preach and give spiritual direction to her nuns in Pastrana. A few months after his profession as a Carmelite in 1573, Gracián was appointed Apostolic Visitor to the Discalced Carmelites in Andalusia, and before a year had passed he was named the vicar provincial of all Carmelites in Andalusia. In 1575 he became the Visitor to both the Andalusian Calced and Discalced Carmelites. See The Collected Letters of St Teresa, 632.

8 Victoria Lincoln, Teresa – A Woman: A Biography of Teresa of Ávila (Albany: State University of New York, 1984): 185. Lincoln writes that there is significant contradictory information surrounding Gracián, with much written to justify his expulsion from the Carmelites after Teresa’s death, and much being simply “luminous whitewash” written in accordance with Gracián’s biography, in which he presents himself as, like Christ, having been persecuted without cause. In 1999, Gracián’s sentence of expulsion from the Carmelites was lifted after extensive review, and the following year the Carmelite order began official proceedings in his cause for canonisation (The Collected Letters of St Teresa, 640).


10 The conditions of Gracián’s dismissal prevented him from re-entering Carmel either as a discalced friar or among the regular observance. Following his expulsion, he sought admission to other congregations, including the Carthusians,Dominicans and Augustinians, but all refused him. He was eventually authorised by papal brief to return to the Carmelites, but due to the strong opposition in Spain he lived with the Italian Carmelites of the Observance while retaining his discalced habit before assisting the Discalced Carmelites in establishing a presence in the Spanish Netherlands. See Gracián, Jerome Gracián: Treatise on Melancholy, 2009: 15; Stephen Payne, The Carmelite Tradition, 2011: 65.
produced in the city of Rome and to established their sale price. Zaragoza, a Dominican friar, was involved as consultant theologian for the Roman Inquisition in 1596, and acted as socio to the Spanish friar Bartolomeo Miranda, who held the office of Master of the Sacred Palace from 1591 until his death in 1597. The Summary makes no mention of Miranda by name, and, as will soon be discussed, Gracián identifies Zaragoza as the impetus behind his composition of the work. In fact, it appears evident that without Zaragoza’s influence Gracián would never have written an entire book on the subject of St Joseph. What also seems apparent is that Gracián’s personal circumstances – his rise to prominence within the Carmelite order, his turbulent expulsion and subsequent captivity and his striving to be reinstated as a Carmelite – all impacted on his perception of St Joseph and on the way in which he communicated the virtues of the saint to his audience.

In his Summary, Gracián identifies fifty virtues, or “excellencies”, of Joseph, which he compiles into five books, each of which focuses on an individual title of Joseph. In applying such a focus, Gracián’s Summary responds to the heightened devotional interest in Joseph circulating during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

The liturgical cult of St Joseph saw prominent growth following the incorporation of his feast (March 19) into the Roman Calendar in 1479 by Pope Sixtus IV. From this date, until the Milanese Dominican Isidoro Isolano published his Summa de Donis Sancti Iosef (Summa of the Gifts of St Joseph) in 1522, numerous altars and chapels, oratories and churches, religious houses and institutes of consecrated life, confraternities and associations, and at least one

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11 Witcombe’s study of Renaissance printing states that any print material produced in Rome required the special permission (imprimatur or publicatur) of the Master of the Sacred Palace, who was granted this authority through the Papal Bull of Innocent VIII issued in 1479. In 1570, Pope Pius V established the Congregation of the Index of prohibited books (books considered harmful to the faith and thus forbidden to be read or possessed by the faithful), and installed the Master of the Sacred Palace as its permanent secretary. Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe, Copyright in the Renaissance: Prints and the Privilegio in Sixteenth-Century Venice and Rome (Brill: Leiden, 2004): 72, 73.


14 These titles are husband of Mary, father of Jesus, just man, angel on earth (or angelic man), patron of the interior life, and patron of a happy death. Jerónimo Gracián, Obras del P. Maestro F. Geronymo Gracián de la Madre de Dios, de la Orden de N. Señora del Carmen (Madrid: Alonso Martín, 1616): 231.
INTRODUCTION

hospital were founded in Italy in Joseph’s name. The reasons for Joseph’s increased liturgical importance are numerous; what is clear is that the “ardent devotion” of Bernard of Clairvaux, expanded upon during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by Dominican and Franciscan scholastics, and by Jean Gerson, played a significant role. This period also witnessed significant social and religious upheaval, including recurrences of plague, the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, competition for territory in the Italian peninsula, and the posting of Martin Luther’s theses in 1517. The championing of Joseph as the patron of specific causes at this time indicates a heightened belief in the breadth and power of his intercession.

It was during this period of growing devotional interest in Joseph that the Archconfraternity of St Joseph of the Carpenters began, founded in Rome in 1540. Pre-eminently lay and voluntary organisations, confraternities were responsible for encouraging piety and promoting charity among their members, with a particular focus on preparation for the afterlife. Often small and local groups, confraternities fostered an effective fusion between the spiritual and temporal realities; they encouraged piety, such as devotion to a particular saint, while also promoting

16 Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 3-6.
17 Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 9.
18 From the 1470s Joseph was promulgated as the champion of the Church in the face of Ottoman expansion, from 1517, as defender against the threat of Protestantism, and by the mid-1520s, as intercessor in evangelising Mexico; he was eventually made patron of the conquest and conversion of Mexico in 1555. Joseph’s patronage has expanded to include workers, communicants, children, and migrants. Carolyn C. Wilson, “Some Further Evidence”, 2006: 904; Carolyn C. Wilson, “St Joseph in the Early Cinquecento: New ‘Readings’ of Two Parmigianino Drawings and a Recently Discovered Bedoli”, New Studies on Old Masters: Essays in Renaissance Art in Honour of Colin Eisler, ed. John Garton and Diane Wolffthal (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2011): 331; Stefania Colafranceschi, “Patrocinio, Intercessione, Gloria di San Giuseppe attraverso l’Iconografia Devozionale in Italia” (Kalisz: St Joseph Symposium, 2009): 845.
19 Joseph was enthusiastically adopted as patron particularly by carpenters, who were often members of lay confraternities or sodalities. These groups encouraged a rapid spread of saintly devotion among the faithful. According to Barbara Wisch, the particular spread in Josephine devotion “was an expression of the interest generated by the nascent bourgeoisie, composed of merchants and artisans”, and this is especially pertinent given that the Summary itself was written in response to a request made by an organisation of carpenters. Wisch, “Re-Viewing the Image of Confraternities in Renaissance Italy”, Confraternitas 14 (2), 2003: 17; Luis Weckmann, The Medieval Heritage of Mexico, vol. 1, translated by Frances M. López-Morillas (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992): 206.
20 The oldest group of this kind to exist in Rome has been identified as the confraternity of the Gonfalone, which was founded in the 1260s. It numbered among the largest and most well-known of the Roman sodalities, and by the sixteenth century had amassed a vast membership ranging from shopkeepers to wealthy families and members of the papal court. For purpose and function of confraternities, see Christopher F. Black, Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): ix. For information on the confraternity of the Gonfalone, see Barbara Wisch, “Violent Passions: Plays, Pawnbrokers and the Jews of Rome, 1539”, Beholding Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ed. Allie Terry-Fritsch and Erin Felicia Labbie (Oxon: Routledge, 2016): 198; Barbara Wisch and Nerida Newbigin, Acting on Faith: the Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Renaissance Rome (Philadelphia: St Joseph’s University Press, 2013).
social involvement through charitable works and networking across professional, social and political spheres. They functioned as a means by which individuals could express penitence, reap benefits through good works, find spiritual and physical nourishment, and feel protected and comfortable in a familiar cultural and linguistic environment which offered a clear pathway to social and economic networking. Additionally, confraternities signified one of the most fundamental and private forms of devotion present during the late medieval period and Renaissance. Archconfraternities, which flourished during the sixteenth century, particularly in Rome, were formerly simple confraternities which had been given full papal recognition and were thus afforded special privileges and indulgences. They also functioned at the centre of a network of confraternities of a similar type, and were responsible for setting standards regarding, among others, protocol, devotions, and dress.

The Archconfraternity of St Joseph of the Carpenters was formed following a schism within the confraternity of St Gregory the Great, which had been founded by a group of masons in the 1520s. This schism resulted in some members of the group forming their own independent organisation which had as its patron St Joseph. The confraternity established themselves in the Mamertine Prison in the Roman Forum, and soon after their foundation funded the construction of a church, San Giuseppe dei Falegnami (St Joseph of the Carpenters) above the prison. The church, which was consecrated in 1598, contains an oratory which Gracián writes was used by the members of the confraternity when they gathered to pray and sing litanies.

27 The New Testament references Joseph’s trade as a carpenter (Matt 13:19), in this way establishing him as a suitable intercessor for a group of carpenters.
The *Summary* clearly indicates how Gracián came to be connected with the confraternity and to write this work for them. The prologue to the 1597 Spanish and Italian editions opens with this dedication to the group:

*Dia de S. Cathalina deste año de 1596, estando yo en S. Pedro en las estácias del Maesto del Sacro palacio, llegaron dos hermanos de vuestra Cofradia a pedir licencia, para hazer imprimir un pequeño libro intitulado (meditaciones de los sietes dolores, y gozos de S. Ioseph) que os ebarion los hermanos de Perusa, donde estava impresso. Y como viesse el Padre Maestro Fr. Pedro Iuan Saragoza vuestro desseo, y devocion, me cometio que leyesse aquel libro, y escriviesse alguna obra mas copiosa, que se pudiesse inprimir en alabanças deste dichosissimo Sancto.*

[On the feast of St Catherine [November 25] in the year 1596, while I was at St Peter’s visiting the Master of the Sacred Palace, two members of your guild arrived to request permission to publish a little book entitled *Meditations on the Seven Sorrows and Joys of St Joseph*30 that was sent to them by their counterparts in Perugia,31 where it had been printed. And seeing your fervour and devotion, Father Master Pedro Juan de Zaragoza charged me to read that book and to write a book of greater length for publication in praise of this most blessed saint.]*32

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30 The work of the Capuchin friar John of Fano on the seven sorrows of St Joseph has been proposed (see Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 60, n.26) as the book which the brothers wanted reprinted. (John of Fano, *Le Sette Pater Nostri de Santo Joseph* (*Operetta devotissima chiamata Arte de la Unione*), Brescia: Damiano e Iacomo Philippo, 1536). Gracián writes that, in addition to meditations on the seven sorrows and joys of St Joseph, the book contained litanies of the Name of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary, orations, commemorations, and a litany of St Joseph. *Sumario*, 1597: i. What seems apparent is that these meditations on Joseph’s sorrows and joys were inspired by the devotion to the Seven Sorrows and Joys of Mary. Meditations on the sorrows and joys of Mary date from the thirteenth century, with a chaplet of Mary’s sorrows originating with the Servites in the fourteenth century and gaining popularity particularly during the Black Death (1347-51). The writings of the Franciscans helped to define seven particular sorrows and joys for contemplation by the faithful. See John D. Miller, *Beads and Prayers: The Rosary in History and Devotion* (London: Burns and Oates, 2002): 209; Willem Elders, *Symbolic Scores: Studies in the Music of the Renaissance* (Brill: Leiden, 1994): 154, 156.

31 The collaboration between similar devotional groups based in different locations perhaps indicates that the Roman group was an Archconfraternity. Wilson (“Some Further Evidence”, 2006) identifies evidence of a second society of St Joseph existing in Perugia in 1558. She suggests that it may have been this group which shared the book of Joseph’s sorrows and joys with the confraternity in Rome (pp. 912-913).

32 Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 1. The English translation is taken from Joseph F. Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 20. Note that the word “cofradia” is interpreted here by Chorpenning as “guild”. Gracián refers to the members of the cofradia as “brethren” rather than “members”. He indicates in his concluding doctrine to Book I of the *Summary* that the group was founded in 1540 in the Mamertine prison, and further suggests that the group, by virtue of their association with a church, was not a guild but a confraternity. Confirmation of this fact was found in the work of Fr Tarcisio Stramare (“San Giuseppe e la redenzione del lavoro”, *Rivista Internazionale de Teologia e Cultura* 159 (1998): 26) in which the group is referred to as a confraternity, and in various histories of the Mamertine and Tulliano prisons (see particularly Francesco Cancellieri, *Notizie del Carcere Tulliano detto poi Mamertino alle radici del campidoglio ove fu rinchiuso S. Pietro e delle catene con cui fu avvinto prima del suo martirio* (Rome: Luigi Perego, 1788): 173), which identified the group as a religious organisation and specifically as an “Archconfraternity”. Carolyn C. Wilson writes (*St Joseph in Italian Society and Art*, 2001: 10) that a common error in Josephine studies is to assume that confraternities dedicated to St Joseph were simply trade guilds, rather than devotional or religious organisations.
The 1609 edition of the *Summary* adds further to this description. This particular edition, which is dedicated to Isabel Clara Eugenia, the daughter of Philip II and regent to the Spanish Netherlands, includes a prologue addressed directly to the reader. Gracián opens his prologue with the words:

*La devocion del glorioso S. Ioseph, el provecho de las almas, y la ternura que me causaron las lagrimas de unos Carpinteros, benigno Lector, me movio a escribir este Summario de sus excelencias.*

[Devotion to St Joseph, the benefit to souls, and the tenderness caused by the tears of some carpenters, good reader, moved me to write this Summary of his excellencies.]^{34}

And further, in his description of his encounter with the carpenters, he writes:

*Negó se la el Maestro, y comenzaron a derramar lagrimas con tanta ternura, que a los dos nos enternecieron.*

[The Master denied it (the Carpenters’ request to reprint the Perugian book on St Joseph) and they began to shed tears with such tenderness that we were both moved.]^{35}

Continuing his prologue, Gracián identifies the *Summary*’s aim as to “write on the glorious St Joseph to the satisfaction of the brothers, for the honour of the saint and for the good of souls”, and thus encourage devotion to St Joseph among all the faithful. Interestingly, to support this final point, the Italian translation of the *Summary* includes, under its address to the “very devoted brothers of the company of St Joseph”, the words *di tutta la Cristianità* (of all Christianity).^{36} The *Summary* offered the confraternity clear theological and devotional instruction regarding their patron, valuable instruction for prayer and worship,^{38} and a distinct source of identity. Additionally, it offered Joseph to the brethren as a clear and relevant model for daily life. By presenting clearly and thoroughly the life and privileges of Joseph, the

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^{34} Gracián, *Sumario*, 1609: i.

^{35} Gracián, *Sumario*, 1609: i.

^{36} *Che si potesse stampare a lode di questo gloriosissimo Santo, e ad utile e profitto di tutte le vostre compagnia, e di tutte l'anime de i suoi devoti*. Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: i.

^{37} Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: i.

^{38} Blancus’ engravings visualise and reinforce Gracián’s comprehensive Josephine devotion, and they work along with their accompanying epigrams to present an iconographic program of the saint which arguably would have encouraged meditation and prayer. Gracián’s text, particularly his closing instruction at the end of each Book of the *Summary*, which is addressed directly to the brethren and which he refers to as “doctrine”, would also offer such guidance.
Summary is made relevant to the brethren of the Archconfraternity who, like Joseph, were themselves working men and perhaps fathers and heads of their households. Joseph is cast not as a distant intercessor, but as a tangible figure and effective patron and model for the brethren.

Gracián also describes his own “satisfaction and contentment” in composing the Summary, writing that Joseph has been “my advocate all the time of my life”, and identifying a secondary advocate in St Teresa who, he writes, “founded many monasteries of the Discalced Carmelites, devoted to and under the name of St Joseph”.39 His letters disclose a secondary aim of offering support to Carmelite nuns and friars in their vocation.40

When we consider the nature and environment of the Summary’s origins, we can identify potential further aims. Gracián was reinstated as a Discalced Carmelite on his return to Rome in 1596, due in part to his “heroic comportment during captivity” and the official commencement of Teresa’s cause for beatification.41 Although he had been readmitted into the order, the Spanish Carmelites regarded him with such great hostility that he was advised to remain in Rome, where he lived among the Calced friars while wearing the habit and following the rule of the Discalced.42 Gracián’s reputation as a “hero” at the hands of his Turkish captors, and the protection afforded him by Teresa’s beatification process, worked in part to repair a damaged reputation. It is quite conceivable that the Summary, which was dedicated to a much-loved, popular saint, and which was backed by Zaragoza, an influential Dominican theologian, was written with the intention to restore Gracián’s honour and also to give grounding to his particularly reformatory ideas.

The wide circulation of the work strengthened the Summary’s exceptional influence in advancing the spread of Josephine doctrine and theology. In his preface to the 1609 edition of the text, Gracián testified that he had:

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y \text{he visto por experiencia, que in Italia, y España ha hecho fruto, para mover los animos a la devocion deste Santo, y de su Esposa. Y habiendo leido los Arzobispos de Toledo, Valencia, y otros perladios, han ordenando en sus diocesis, que el dia de S. Joseph sea fiesta de guardar.}
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39 Il che ho fatto io con mia gran satisfazione e contente, per averlo avuto per mio avvocato in tutto in tempo della vita mia, e anco per aver consessato alcuni anni in Spagna la madre Teresa di Gesù, quale fondò molti monasteriy Monache Carmelitane Scalze, a devotione e sotto nome di san Giosef. Gracián, Sommario, 1597: i.
40 Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 21. The text’s secondary aim perhaps becomes even more relevant when we consider the tense situation of the Carmelite order in the 16th century.
Gracián’s work also had a strong influence in terms of artistic representation of Joseph, with a number of Spanish seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists producing works which bore visual affinity with the Summary. This influence is strongly based on the artworks which are found in the first edition of the Summary, published in Spanish, and in its Italian translation.

Both include a series of six engravings composed by Christophorus Blancus. A native of Lorraine, Blancus worked in Rome from 1591 until his death in 1620. His work flourished around 1600, and he is perhaps best known for his engraving of the Holy Family (1595), a signed portrait of Michelangelo (1612), and an engraved map of Japan (1612). Each of these...

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43 English translation taken from Joseph F. Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 53.
44 According to the imprimatur, it was published at the same time as the original Spanish. Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 108. This study uses the engravings found in the 1597 Italian translation of the Summary, which during my own research I confirmed are identical to those included in the original Spanish edition. Several passages from the Summary’s text included in this work are sourced from the Italian translation and have been translated into English by me. The remainder is taken from the works of Fr Joseph Chorpenning, particularly his 1993 anthology Just Man, which use the original Spanish edition. The translations of the epigrams accompanying the engravings are the work of Patrick T. Brennan, S.J., and come from Chorpenning’s study of the engravings.
45 The 1597 Spanish edition of the Summary also includes a frontispiece depicting the Madonna and Child, which is repeated at the end of the text’s prologue; however, this is not explored in this study. “Engraving” is described by Antony Griffiths as the oldest of the intaglio processes, and as a “highly skilled craft”, requiring much practice to cut an even groove, and involving a long process of learning how to create parallel lines with the graver or burin, which give the work its distinctive quality. Griffiths notes that the idea of using engraved plates to make prints on paper emerged in Germany in the fifteenth century. The durability of copper and the fact it can be easily incised made it a suitable material for the plates, which could be inked numerous times and thus produce more prints. The Summary’s engravings feature a clear mastery of the engraving technique, with the engraver’s use of evenly-spaced, parallel lines and cross-hatching to indicate shading and depth suggesting he was a mature artist. See Antony Griffith’s work Prints and Printmaking: an introduction to the history and techniques, (California: University of California Press, 1996), especially pages 38 and 39. For details on printmaking, see Gerald W. R. Ward (ed.), The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 194.
46 This work, in continuation of previous scholarship, titles the artist as “Christophorus Blancus”. It remains unclear as to how Gracián came into contact with him.
48 Michael Bryan, Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, Biographical and Critical (London: H. G. Bohn, 1849): 82. Blancus’ map incorporates almost all the salient features present in the lost map of Inácio Moreira, was circulated widely for the twenty years following its printing, and was used in the production of at least three...
INTRODUCTION

engravings introduces a book of the Summary,49 depicts a scene from the life of Joseph, and is accompanied by a Latin epigram written by Francisco de Cabrera Morale, acolyte to Pope Clement VIII.50

Taking these engravings as its core focus, this thesis will use art historical, cultural and theological lenses to consider each engraving in terms of its visual composition and message. Respecting the Summary as a unified work, the engravings are examined alongside the accompanying epigrams and the main text. They are considered in light of the work’s social and cultural contexts, especially the religious developments resulting from the Council of Trent (1545-47; 1551-52; 1562-63).51 In this way, the intrinsic connection between the text, engravings and epigrams becomes clear and the Summary’s response to theological and devotional portrayals of Joseph are more easily explored. These methods of analysis will help this research achieve its fundamental aim of demonstrating how the engravings of the Summary, in conjunction with the epigrams and text de facto, interpret and communicate the nature of Joseph’s fatherhood and masculinity and present them in ways which were tangible for its primary audience: the members of the Archconfraternity of St. Joseph of the Carpenters.

Fr Joseph Chorpenning states that the style and format of the Summary’s engravings, in conjunction with their relationship to the text, enable them to function as emblems.52 John Manning notes that the emblem emerged as a distinct literary device in the first half of the sixteenth century, and books which incorporated the emblem were often moral or devotional

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49 Except for the sixth, which precedes a Litany of Joseph. I also found that in the Spanish edition of the Summary which I consulted, the engraving of the Marriage of Mary and Joseph was placed immediately after the title page, while in the Italian edition it follows the prologue. Unfortunately, the Spanish edition I consulted has suffered humidity damage, which has left several of the engravings discoloured.


51 In the Council’s closing session, it passed a decree on sacred images, clearly expressing that while images of Christ, of the Mother of God, and of other saints are especially fit for placement in the churches, and while they should be venerated, they do not themselves contain any divinity or virtue. Art was viewed as having a positive function in leading audiences to a contemplation of the divine, with the Council stressing the importance of the faithful being “instructed” and “excited” by art, by which they could “adore and love God and cultivate piety”. The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, trans. H.J. Schroeder, O.P. (Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, 1978): 215-6; Jeffrey Chipp Smith, Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002): 53; Christopher C. Wilson, “St Joseph in Spanish American Colonial Images of the Holy Family: Guardian of an Earthly Paradise”, in Joseph F. Chorpenning, Joseph of Nazareth Through the Centuries (Pennsylvania: St Joseph’s University Press, 2011): 241.

52 Fr Chorpenning was the first scholar to recognise and argue for the significant connection between the format of Gracián’s publication and the sixteenth-century emblem. See Joseph F. Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 108, 109.
Bradley J. Nelson offers an authoritative definition of the “emblem”, which he identifies as a combination of the inscriptio, epigram or titular motto (“fragmentary soul”), with an equally fragmentary image (“body”), and followed by a subscriptio, or commentary, which guides the reader “towards the solution of a verbal-visual enigma”. The description of the elements of the emblem in such a way is found in Paolo Giovio’s *Dialogo dell’imprese militari et amorose* (1555), in which he stresses that the motto is itself “the soul of the body”, and thus gives the image its life; such an idea was embodied in the first emblem book, Andrea Alciati’s *Emblematum Liber* (1531). Drawing from such sources, this thesis defines the emblem as a visual-textual device which intrinsically combines image, text, and epigram, with each element operating in accordance with the others to present a didactic and moral message and to communicate the true meaning of the emblem through their rich internal harmony and symbolism.

While the *Summary*’s images and text have historically been regarded as separate elements, they are connected profoundly and intimately: the text itself serves as both the inspiration for and commentary on the images and epigrams. The scenes chosen for illustration are specific and their placement before each Book of the *Summary* means that the audience engages with them even before Gracián’s text. In this position, they serve both to inform and be informed by the text. They act as a precis or abstract of Gracián’s main ideas and doctrine, presenting them in a way that is not only easily understandable and accessible but also memorable. Furthermore, the epigrams provide the engravings with their emblematic quality, working with the image to convey the essential meaning of the forthcoming text. They offer insight into the

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54 Bradley J. Nelson, *The Persistence of Presence: Emblem and Ritual in Baroque Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010): 6. Peter M. Daly argues that the close interaction between the elements of the emblem has its origins in a variety of areas, including classical myth and allegory, the biblical and Christian tradition, medieval natural lore and bestiaries, Horapollo and hieroglyphs, and heraldry. See Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem: structural parallels between the emblem and literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 3rd ed.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), especially page 10, for more comprehensive analysis of these origins.
55 L’anima del corpo.
58 The perception of the images and text of the *Summary* as separable is perhaps the reason why in almost all reproductions of the *Summary* the engravings have been omitted. Joseph F. Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 123.
specific meaning of the image for both the sixteenth-century and the contemporary audience, thus guiding the audience’s understanding of the image.\textsuperscript{60}

Peter M. Daly writes that despite the significance of the emblem, “iconographic scholarship has not produced any systematic studies of the emblem as a form or genre in its own right, nor has such an approach been conducive to the establishment of an adequate theory of the emblem.”\textsuperscript{61} Further, some critics have denounced the emblem as a “degenerate form of allegory”, “arbitrary”, and “capricious”.\textsuperscript{62} By exploring the ways in which the character and attributes of St Joseph are communicated both visually and textually, this study acknowledges the significance and function of the emblem in conveying meaning.

Although the text of the \textit{Summary} has been the subject of academic discussion, the engravings have been, until recently, relatively overlooked and ignored in research. In 1995, the Centro Español de Investigaciones Josefinas, located in Valladolid, published a facsimile of the \textit{Summary}, but did not include the engravings. Further, Fr Jose Antonio Carrasco, also of the Centro, conducted extensive research into the \textit{Summary} but did not discuss the engravings. The failure of the Valladolid book to mention the engravings was countered by Fr Chorpenning who, with his 1996 publication, gives the engravings ground-breaking and scholarly attention. Until Fr Chorpenning’s work, the engravings had been neglected in research and deliberately removed from re-publications of the \textit{Summary}. The precise reason for this is unclear: perhaps the engravings were simply regarded as ornamental accompaniments rather than crucial elements of the whole text. Whatever the motivation, their removal denies the engravings, and the \textit{Summary} as a whole, of their original and lasting function.

In academic scholarship, Joseph has traditionally been seen to be overlooked, particularly when viewed in light of the wealth of iconographic and hagiographical studies focused on the Virgin Mary, and this research began with this perception. Over the course of this study, however, it has become clear that there is much literature available on Joseph both as a stand-alone figure and in relationship to Jesus and Mary. An invaluable source for this thesis was the \textit{Bibliographie sur saint Joseph et la sainte Famille}, composed by Fr Roland Gauthier, CSC, which contains over nineteen thousand entries of works taking Joseph or the Holy Family as

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Daly} Peter M. Daly, \textit{Literature in the Light of the Emblem}, 1998: 6.
\bibitem{Daly2} Peter M. Daly, \textit{Literature in the Light of the Emblem}, 1998: 3.
\end{thebibliography}
their subject. This alone shows that, contrary to the common perception, much has been contributed to the field of Josephine research.

Particularly useful in gaining an understanding of the history of the Josephine cult are the works of Fr Francis L. Filas. Filas’ works offer a concise history of the presentation of Joseph in Scripture and apocryphal literature, and throughout history. They add a critical background to understanding the historical developments in the Josephine cult, particularly within a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century context. Significant Josephine research has been conducted in recent years, with the works of Dr Carolyn C. Wilson, Charlene Villaseñor Black, Stefania Colafranceschi, and Sara Nair James of particular benefit to this project. A specialist in Josephine studies, Dr Wilson’s book, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art: new directions and interpretations*, offers a detailed exploration of social influences upon Italian artistic representations of Joseph. Charlene Villaseñor Black’s *Creating the Cult of St Joseph: art and gender in the Spanish empire*, provides a thorough historical analysis of Joseph’s cult within the focused context of the New World. Villaseñor Black also clarifies how artistic depictions of the saint transformed in the post-Tridentine period. Stefania Colafranceschi’s studies of artistic representations of Joseph, particularly as *nutritor Domini* and in holy cards, critically engages with various attitudes to Joseph in the Early Modern period, particularly in terms of his role as patron and defender of the Church. Sara Nair James’ recent study of Ugolino di Prete Ilario’s visual depictions of Joseph in Orvieto cathedral offers a focused study of a specific and localised artistic approach to Joseph while also examining the historiography and broader developments of the Josephine cult.

The spread of the Josephine cult went hand-in-hand with shifting social perceptions of the roles of men and fathers, and so this thesis has engaged with several prominent studies focused on the lives of Italian Renaissance and Early Modern lay and religious men. Through this exploration, it has been found that masculinity studies are a fairly recent phenomenon, and that studies of devotion in the Renaissance, and particularly regarding cults of the saints, focus more prominently on the feminine experience. The works of David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber offer a useful background into family life and the roles of husbands and fathers during

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64 This title translates as “nurturer of the Lord”, and is used to imply not only feeding, but also nurturing, education and guardianship. Wilson (St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 23) writes that *nutritor Domini* is the title most frequently given to Joseph during the Renaissance period, and such titles describing his fatherhood grew in popularity over references to his role as Mary’s spouse.
this period. André Vauchez’s studies of lay religiosity focus specifically on the growth of interest in lay sanctity as a suitable model for holiness, thus highlighting connections between the cults of lay saints, such as St Elzear (ca 1285 – 1323) and his wife, Blessed Delphina (ca 1282 – 1360), and the cult of St Joseph. Dyan Elliot’s study of spiritual marriages teases out the connections between marriage and chastity, and to the ways in which the chaste marriage of Mary and Joseph was presented as both valid and imitable. Further, the works of Pat Cullum and Katherine Lewis present an effective link between masculinity, celibacy and holiness, thus informing this work’s presentation of Joseph as both masculine and chaste.

Most scholarship available on the Summary itself has been undertaken by Fr Joseph Chorpenning. His anthology Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ: An Anthology of Readings from Jerónimo Gracián’s ‘Summary of the Excellencies of St Joseph’ (1597) provides analysis and commentary on particular sections of the Summary, offering the first English translation published on any part of the text. He reviews the engravings in the brief companion piece to his anthology, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative: Christophorus Blancus’s Engravings for the Summary of the Excellencies of St Joseph (1597)”. In this work, Chorpenning notes that the engravings “have been neglected by modern scholars who have studied this important book.”65 Both of these works have proved to be invaluable in the information and arguments they offer.

In his succinct and focused study of the engravings, Chorpenning offers the first specialised academic review of Blancus’ prints. Each engraving is treated individually in its own right, with strong consideration given to their emblematic function and their role in communicating devotion to Joseph. Due to their relative exceptionality in the field of research on Gracián’s Summary and, more specifically, on the engravings, Chorpenning’s works naturally form an important foundation on which this thesis builds. My research considers each engraving in terms of its emblematic function, as Chorpenning does, but it expands upon his work with a focused analysis on the engravings’ artistic composition and their relationship with social, religious and cultural contexts. My thesis builds upon Chorpenning’s research to explore the deep Scriptural, apocryphal, patristic and devotional influences upon the Summary. Thus, in applying both art historical and theological lenses, this study approaches the Summary and its engravings from a new perspective and uses the previous research on the Summary to draw deeper conclusions.

The centrepiece of each of the six chapters of this thesis is an analysis of one of Blancus’ engravings. This analysis naturally follows the order in which they appear in the Summary, with Chapter One focusing on the engraving of the Marriage of the Virgin, which it considers in relationship to the accompanying epigram and text of the Summary. It explores the ways in which the Summary communicates the Scriptural account of the marriage of Joseph and Mary, apocryphal narratives describing their union, and writings of the Church Fathers on the virginity and validity of the marriage. This chapter examines related artworks, highlighting the similarities and differences they hold with Blancus’ engraving. Also explored is how the prevailing Italian view of marriage, influenced by Tridentine reform, is reflected in Blancus’ iconographic choices. Each of these areas is examined in order to demonstrate the meaning of Blancus’ composition, the impact of specific influences, and why it conveys a particular message. This chapter also assesses the influence of the Summary’s approach to the marriage of Mary and Joseph upon the brethren of the Archconfraternity.

The second chapter analyses Blancus’ second engraving of the Holy Family at work. The engraving is considered in close relationship to Gracián’s text, to the accompanying epigram, and to related artistic representations, predominately of Netherlandish origin, of the Holy Family within a domestic setting. This chapter will explore in depth Book II’s characterisation of Joseph as fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of true fatherhood, and its presentation of the saint as the typological parallel of God, Creator and Divine Father. Considering each of these elements, this chapter relates the imagery to the immediate context of the confraternity, demonstrating the Summary’s effective modelling of Joseph as father and artisan.

Chapter Three engages in a study of Joseph’s role as a “just man”, doing so through an examination of the Summary’s emblematic depiction of the Conversation between Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which highlights Joseph’s prudence and justice. This depiction will again be considered in light of the related epigram and text de facto, and will also be seen in connection with Scriptural accounts and artistic representations of the Holy Family or of the sacra conversazione, which traditionally strove to cast Joseph as the protector and defender of Mary. The emblematic elements of Book III work harmoniously to present Joseph as a prudent, wise man, attentive to the needs of his family and living in full submission to the will of God, and it ultimately casts him as a model to be emulated by members of the Archconfraternity.

The following chapter considers Gracián’s identification of Joseph as an “angelic man”, or angel on earth, as communicated in Blancus’ image of the Holy Family’s Return from Egypt.
Taking into consideration Scriptural references to Joseph’s virtues and trials, this chapter considers Blancus’ corresponding engraving and the ways in which the image and its accompanying epigram both inspire and are inspired by Gracián’s text. Of particular importance here is the epigram’s titling of Joseph as *atlas, dux, custos*; taking each of these titles in turn, the chapter considers the ways in which they are visualised in Blancus’ engraving and in Gracián’s text. Further explored is the relevance the representation of the difficulties faced by Joseph and the Holy Family would have held for the brethren of the Archconfraternity.

The fifth chapter examines Joseph’s contemplation and role as patron of the interior life as shown in the engraving accompanying Book V, which depicts the Holy House of Nazareth. Through its depiction of the sleeping Joseph receiving divine revelation, while Mary and Jesus prepare a meal, the scene portrays the ideal balance between action and contemplation, a subject which is further stressed through the accompanying epigram and text. This particular subject features highly in Carmelite spirituality and in the writings of St Teresa of Ávila, and thus finds a prominent place in the *Summary*. In this way, Joseph, shown here as practicing a balance between action and contemplation, is presented as a model for both the Carmelite religious and for the brethren of the Archconfraternity. Relationships between the engraving and artistic representations of the dream of Joseph and of the Holy Family within a domestic setting will also be explored, in order to indicate Blancus’ artistic inspirations and motivations.

The sixth chapter explores Blancus’ final engraving, which depicts the death of Joseph. It begins with a visual analysis of the artwork, comparing it with the engraving’s accompanying epigram and text *de facto* and with other artworks and literature, particularly apocryphal, depicting the same subject. While many artistic representations of the death of St Joseph date after the *Summary*’s publication, Blancus’ engraving does contrast with the pre-established iconography of the scene in the simplicity of its composition. Book V ultimately presents Joseph’s death as the most perfect, in that in death the saint was accompanied and supported by Jesus and the Virgin. This chapter illustrates that the representation of a “good” or “happy” death would have been particularly meaningful and even reassuring during a time in which death, though an everyday reality, was still approached with trepidation and in which groups like the Archconfraternity were established with the particular goal of ensuring salvation for their members.

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66 These titles are translated as “Atlas, leader, guardian”. They are not found in Scripture or in apocrypha, yet they do feature in some areas of devotion (particularly “guardian”). Further, it appears they do form part of the Litany to Joseph which follows Book V of the *Summary* and which itself is attributed to Gracián.
The purpose of this study is, first and foremost, to draw attention to the vital importance held by the engravings and their accompanying epigrams within Gracián’s *Summary*. It presents them not as disconnected elements, but as an organic whole. It highlights their reciprocal relationship within the *Summary* and their role in honouring Joseph’s privileges and in presenting him as a tangible patron and role model for the Archconfraternity. Further, this study illustrates the role of the engravings as inspiring and commenting upon the text, and demonstrates the crucial function of the epigrams in revealing the engravings’ message.

Due to the limited resources available, particularly regarding the decision to include emblems within the *Summary*, and the composition of the engravings, certain questions remain unanswered. It is unclear, for instance, how Christophorus Blancus became involved in the *Summary*’s creation, and who decided to present the engravings as emblems and why. It seems clear that the text was written first and that both Blancus and Cardinal Morale were instructed to follow a strict set of guidelines, though exactly who devised these guidelines is unclear. Just how much licence each contributor exercised is unknown. Owing to the tightly-knit final product, however, it seems their creative impulses may have been quite limited.

This work is not only informed by foundational works in the field of Josephine research, such as those of Filas, Wilson and Villaseñor Black, but also contributes a new interpretation of Joseph’s artistic and cultural legacies to the field. It aims to resurrect Joseph as a legitimate protagonist in the lives of Christ, the Virgin, and the Christian faithful. Additionally, reflecting the recent historiographical tendency to move away from “Big Man” histories, current scholarly interest inclines toward previously-ignored and marginalised figures, including obscure males, saints of more specific regional focus, or female saints. Joseph is therefore an interesting choice for study, because while he should be a prominent (or “Big Man”) saint, he instead remains obscure and marginalised.

Placing Joseph and his cult in its own context, and treating him as a subject unto himself, encourages a new, more vigorous cult figure to emerge. The study teases out a new understanding of his legacy, one which is steeped in the context of time and place. It is innovative in that it seeks to address a gendered understanding of the male saint, not as a ‘Big Man’ and not as an aspect of the feminine, but as a malleable figure fully in tune with the various ideals and priorities of individual contexts. By exploring the visual expressions of Joseph in the particular context of the Church community and the Archconfraternity of St Joseph of the Carpenters in Rome, this research will build on and offer a new perspective to
traditional iconographic studies in the field of Josephine research. And finally, as the *Summary*’s engravings have not been studied in depth, the research will promote a greater awareness of their significance and power, both as emblematic pieces and as reflections of the ways in which Joseph, men and fathers were regarded in sixteenth-century Italian society.
Gracián dedicates Book I of his *Summary* to an exploration of Joseph’s title as “husband of Mary”. Joseph’s role as spouse has been given much attention in biblical commentary, in apocryphal literature, and in the writings of Church Fathers and theologians. The *Summary*’s emblematic approach to the marriage of Joseph and Mary bears connection with each of these genres as well as with fourteenth and fifteenth-century Italian artistic representations of the scene. Although the *Summary*’s depiction of the marriage, in particular Blancus’ engraving (Plate 1), conforms to the accounts given in Scriptural and apocryphal narratives, it presents striking divergences when compared to the existing artistic tradition. While artistic depictions of the Marriage of the Virgin traditionally present the event as a publicly celebrated union observed by onlookers, most notably the disappointed unsuccessful suitors competing for Mary’s hand, Blancus “privatises” the union, thus emphasising it and ultimately marriage as a whole as sacred, dignified and divinely ordained. The engraving, along with the accompanying epigram and text *de facto*, successfully present to the audience a visualisation of the nature of Mary and Joseph’s marriage and of Joseph’s role as spouse.

The relationship between Joseph and Mary has attracted significant theological and devotional interest throughout history and into the contemporary period. The period from the third to the fifth century witnessed the development of a Marian theology which stressed Mary’s perpetual virginity and chaste marriage to Joseph.¹ The first independent liturgical commemoration of Joseph, which is found in a martyrology from Rheinau dating from the eighth century, lists Joseph as the “spouse of Mary.”² A concern over the validity of the marriage of Joseph and Mary, and particularly the question of Joseph’s virginity, has peppered the historiography of Joseph’s cult since the very early days of the Church Fathers. At the Council of Constance (1414-1418), Jean Gerson, who believed from personal experience that Joseph was a valuable intercessor meriting a feast, argued for the installation of a universal memorial honouring the union of Mary and Joseph, perhaps in order to allay the above-mentioned concerns.³ In more

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recent times, Pope St John Paul II wrote in his apostolic exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos*, that Joseph, by virtue of his relationship with Mary, shares with her in the mystery of the Incarnation and thus becomes “the first guardian of this divine mystery”.\(^4\) This view is one foreshadowed in Gracián’s *Summary*, which identifies Joseph as “the first Christian of the world” in that the saint was the first to know, believe in, serve, and glorify Christ after he entered the world.\(^5\)

Given the historical significance of the theme, it is not surprising that a prominent feature of Book I of the *Summary* is Gracián’s presentation of nine reasons why Christ was born to an espoused virgin.\(^6\) He states that the marriage of Mary and Joseph primarily ensured the concealing of the Divine Mystery of the Incarnation, enabled Jesus’ genealogy, which was carried through the male line, to be written according to the law and thus affirm Jesus’ legitimacy as a son of David. It further ensured that Mary, the “Mother of God” and mother of the three states of marriage, widowhood and virginity, could be protected from suspicion of adultery and thus from stoning.\(^7\) Additionally, the marriage allowed Mary and Jesus to live under the faithful guardianship of Joseph in a union representative of that between Christ and His Church.\(^8\) Gracián makes it clear, therefore, that the particular union of Mary with Joseph was no mere coincidence; rather, it was a vital element of God’s plan for human salvation.\(^9\) This approach works to present the marriage as divinely-ordained, a depiction which is conveyed not solely in the text, but in Blancus’ engraving and in Morale’s epigram.

Following Gracián, Blancus underscores the participation of the divine in this union in his engraving of the Marriage of the Virgin, which is placed before the text of Book I. In accordance with typical iconography, Blancus presents Joseph, Mary, and the priest grouped together in the centre of the image field.\(^10\) The priest gently guides Joseph’s hand, holding the nuptial ring, to Mary’s, and this gesture forms the focal point of the composition. Above the figures is depicted a radiating sphere within which the Tetragrammaton is contained.\(^11\) The orb

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\(^6\) Gracián based his explanation on the writings of specific Church Fathers including St Ambrose and St Thomas Aquinas.

\(^7\) Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597, 5-6.

\(^8\) Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597, 6.


itself is encircled by clouds from which two arms descend, with the hands protectively enfolding the shoulders of Mary and Joseph, in a visible sign that their union is “eternal and indeed fore-ordained.” The arms of God can be seen to form a shape reminiscent of a mandorla, a symbol used to define a sacred space surrounding Christ, the Virgin, or a saint, or as symbolising the realm of heaven and the union of opposites, including the union of heaven and earth. Above Joseph a dove hovers, with the tip of Joseph’s flowering staff highlighting its appearance. The dove can be viewed as a literal transcription of the hagiographic tradition, especially as shown in Jacobus de Voragine’s *Golden Legend* which indicates the miraculous eruption of a dove from Joseph’s staff indicating his selection by divine providence. The inclusion of the dove proves the divine participation in the event. It stands not only as the representation of the Holy Spirit, but its placement above Joseph and facing the Virgin perhaps also alludes to the Annunciation, as a foreshadowing of the descent of the Spirit at Jesus’ baptism, or even as a visualisation of the Messianic title of “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6) bestowed upon Jesus. Beneath the engraving sits the epigram: *Patris nata, parens nati, qua et pneumatis alni Spousa, pio nubit Virgo Maria Joseph* (“The Virgin Mary, who was born of the Father and is bearing the Son, she, who is also the Spouse of the nourishing Spirit, weds holy Joseph”). Joseph’s link to the “nourishing Spirit” to whom Mary is wed is emphasised further by the dove’s placement and the visual line of the staff.

Blancus’ engraving communicates several points conveyed in the *Summary* which form the basis of this chapter’s discussion. It presents the marriage of Joseph and Mary as ordained by God the Father, who is also shown here to participate directly in the union. Following from this, Joseph is cast as the only possible spouse for Mary. He successfully fulfils his role as her husband, both co-operating with and sharing in her perpetual virginity. As Chorpenning writes, the *Summary* establishes a typological link between the Holy Family and the Holy Trinity, with Joseph cast as a representation of the Holy Spirit.

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the brethren of the Archconfraternity as a relatable and accessible model they could emulate in their own relationships.

Book I of the Summary presents the marriage of Mary and Joseph as something in which God participates intimately. The basis for this representation is Scriptural, with the Gospel of Matthew stating that, as Joseph considered separating himself from Mary,

an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emman’u-el”,17 (which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son,18 and he called his name Jesus. (Matt 1:18-25, emphasis mine).

Joseph therefore, with awareness of Mary’s pregnancy and of its divine origin, consents to formalising the marriage. Blancus communicates a presence of the divine through his depiction of the radiating Tetragrammaton. Additionally, the mandorla shape created by his placement of Joseph and Mary literally “in the arms” of God aids in drawing the eye to the focal point of the piece.

Blancus’ engraving of the Marriage of the Virgin does not depict God performing an action or a miracle. It simply denotes God’s presence through the inclusion of the Tetragrammaton, the name of God. Blancus’ inclusion of the title “I am who I am” (Gen 3:14) designates the

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18 Although, as will be seen, several works of apocryphal literature purport that Joseph fathered children or was previously married, there is nothing in Scripture to substantiate this claim. These words from Matthew’s Gospel, “he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son”, do not automatically indicate any existence of sexual relations. They merely show that Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus. Similarly, according to Scriptural usage, the use of the term “firstborn” refers to the first male child, and does not necessarily indicate the existence of other children. See also Luke 2:7. For other Scriptural uses of the term “firstborn”, see Exodus 13:2 and Numbers 3:12.
presence of the divine in the scene, emphasising that the marriage of Mary and Joseph is witnessed and participated in by God.

Blancus’ composition further communicates the interaction between God, Mary and Joseph through its incorporation of a mandorla. The mandorla is created through the lines of God’s descending arms, which carry downwards and continue through Mary and Joseph’s arms, hands and the folds in their garments, passing through their respective bent knees to meet at a central point below. The draperies carry downwards to return focus to the centre of the composition then are strategically redirected up towards the centre of the image, leading the viewer’s eye to the central gesture of the hands and to the focal point of the ring. The mandorla powerfully unifies all figures within the composition, defines a sacred space, and further conveys an intimate union between God and Mary and Joseph. It communicates not only the fulfilment of God’s will in the union of Joseph and Mary, but also the sacred union of heaven and earth which takes place at the Incarnation, an event which is referenced by Blancus in his rendering of a pregnant Mary.

Blancus’ depiction of God’s embrace calls to mind the ancient visual expression of nuptial union, in which two figures are joined through the embrace of a third, central figure. This formula consistently featured in the visual narratives of Roman sarcophagi. A second-century sarcophagus fragment, likely of Proconnesian origin and held in the British Museum collection (Plate 1.1.) shows the marriage ceremony solemnised with the couple clasping right hands (dextrarum iunctio), both the bride and groom embraced by a central figure who gazes outwards. Renaissance art ascribed to the gesture a more general or additional meaning of commendation or reconciliation. Key examples include the exterior wing of Taddeo Gaddi’s triptych, completed in 1333 and held in the Gemäldegalerie (Plate 1.2.), which shows Christ commending the Virgin to the Beloved Disciple as her son, and Barna da Siena’s panel depiction of the Mystic Marriage of St Catherine (Plate 1.3.), in which an angel embraces and reconciles two enemies who exchange the kiss of peace. Such connotations apply closely to Mary and Joseph at the moment of their marriage.

The focus given to the solemnisation of the union of Mary and Joseph, primarily through the carrying of the viewer’s focus downwards through God’s arms to the extended hands of Mary

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and Joseph, further conveys the subject of divine ordination. In his discussion of Joseph’s
divine selection as husband of Mary, Gracián draws parallels between the saint and his Old
Testament precedent, Joseph of Egypt. He quotes the following passage from the Book of
Genesis:

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”
Removing his signet ring from his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph’s hand; he
arrayed him in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain around his neck. He had
him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command; and they cried out in front of
him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover,
Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift
up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” Pharaoh gave Joseph the name
Zaphenathpaneah, and he gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, as
his wife. Thus Joseph gained authority over the land of Egypt (Gen 41:41-45).

Gracián indicates that just as Joseph of Egypt was set apart by Pharaoh and had bestowed upon
him privileges and authority, so too was Joseph set apart by God for an even greater honour.
Interpreting the ring as an allegorical symbol of Christ, Gracián stresses that just as this ring
was given by Pharaoh to Joseph of Egypt, so Christ was bestowed into the care of Joseph of
Nazareth by God and by virtue of his marriage to Mary. His words are given even stronger
emphasis when read in conjunction with the engraving’s visualisation of Joseph’s hand, which
holds the ring, being guided towards Mary’s by the hand of the priest and by extension the arm
of God descending from the clouds. The connections made by both Gracián and Blancus work
not only to establish a genealogy for Joseph, but also to give him legitimacy by paralleling him
against an Old Testament precedent.

Blancus’ depiction of God in a semi-anthropomorphic way that combines text and image is
reflective of “a major caesura” in sixteenth-century Western art and of the gradual, deepening
sensitivity to pictorial depictions of God. Artists working during the first half of the sixteenth

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22 Here, Gracián closely follows the writing of Bernard of Clairvaux, Hom. 2, super missus est. Cited in
Sumario, 1597: 13.
23 In his Summary, Gracián identifies further parallels between Joseph of Egypt and Joseph of Nazareth. The
gold chain Pharaoh places around the neck of Joseph in Genesis 41, argues Gracián, finds its parallel in the arms
of Christ, which hung “a thousand times” around the neck of Joseph. Further, he indicates, the white garments
worn by Joseph of Egypt reflects the justice of Joseph of Nazareth. Gracián also stresses that just as all of Egypt
was obedient to Joseph, so Joseph of Nazareth is head and lord of the house of God and the patron of Mary who,
along with Jesus, was obedient to him. Summario, 1597: 13.
24 Gracián writes that the roundness of the ring symbolises eternity, and the stone in the centre references
divinity and the godhead, which seals the writings of divine grace. Summario, 1597: 13.
25 Robert J. Wilkinson, Tetragrammaton: Western Christians and the Hebrew Name of God (Leiden:
century generally represented God the Father anthropomorphically, as seen in the image of the Betrothal of Joseph and Mary found on the title and dedication page of the mariegola, or book of rules, produced in 1499 for the Confraternity of St Joseph the Protector in San Silvestro and currently held in the Biblioteca Correr in Venice (Plate 1.4.). This image presents Joseph and Mary surrounded by onlookers, with a dove hovering above them, but it is particularly significant to see that the priest has been replaced by an image of God the Father who presides over the ceremony.

In his visual-textual representation of God, Blancus adopts a different approach to the way in which God is depicted visually. In the years following the Council of Trent, Catholic iconographers including Johannus Molanus and Gabriele Paleotti sought to classify the repertoire of sacred images available to artists, regarding the image of the Holy Trinity as particularly complex. Molanus described the Trinity as “the holiest and most difficult of figurae” in that it incorporated not only Jesus, who is representable through the fact he is incarnate, and the Holy Spirit, manifested as a dove at the baptism of Jesus (John 1:32), but also God the Father, whom the Prophet Isaiah stresses is indescribable in appearance: “To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with Him?” (Isaiah 40:18). In his Treatise on Sacred Images (1570), Molanus uses the Tridentine Catechism to argue that symbolic images can be used to depict God as long as their precise value and function is explained by persons of knowledge, and they are rooted in Scripture. Blancus’ representation seems to follow these criteria. God’s countenance is not featured in the engraving; what makes it clear that God is present is the incorporation of the Tetragrammaton, which is deeply grounded in Scripture, and perhaps the inclusion of the arms extending from the circle of cloud at the top of the image field, whose placement communicates a tender celestial or supernatural element. Blancus therefore successfully depicts this marriage as being initiated, orchestrated, and perhaps even witnessed by God, whom he represents in a way reflective of developing cultural sensitivities and changes in iconographic symbolism.

26 Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Society and Art, 2001, pl. 8. Wilson’s discussion of the mariegola in this book (pp. 24-25) is foundational and extensive. She also includes a more recent bibliography on the confraternity in her 2013 work. For foundational and extensive discussion of the mariegola image, see Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, pp. 24-25. Wilson (2013) also includes a more recent bibliography on the confraternity for whom the mariegola was produced.
28 Melion, “‘Nor My Praise to Graven Images’”, 2009: 221.
29 Melion, “‘Nor My Praise to Graven Images’”, 2009: 221
Blancus depicts Joseph and Mary in isolation, with no witnesses, onlookers or extraneous participants beyond the priest and God the Father. While it may be that the confines of the Summary’s small pages meant restrictions on how detailed the scenes could be, it seems more likely that Blancus willingly sought to omit extraneous figures in order to give the scene a more devotional focus and to explicate the Summary’s message.

Such a representation communicates Gracián’s argument that Joseph alone could be chosen as Mary’s husband:

*Che il Padre eterno predestino il Suo Figliuolo al morte per la redenzione di noi altri: che per ciò dice (Agnello morto fin dal principio del mondo) e parimente ordinó ad eterno per sua madre una Vergine sposata. E così nella stessa eternità elesse e predestino Giosef per sposo di questa Vergine...onde lo creo in tempo tale, e in tal luogo, e con tali occasioni che, ponendosi in ezecuzione di questo sposalizio, dessero i sacerdoti di mano sopra Giosef come ministri di Dio, e perche, come uomini, potevano ingannarsi, dichiaro loro la sua volontá co'l mezzo de’ fiori miraculosi.*

[From the beginning of the world, the eternal Father predestined that the Son of God die for us as the lamb of sacrifice, and in this same eternity He ordained that an espoused virgin be His mother. Then in the same eternity He chose and predestined Joseph to be the husband of this virgin. Thus He created him in time and endowed him with grace, so that at the place and time when the priests, as God’s ministers, were proceeding with the Virgin’s espousal, they would select Joseph. And because men might be able to be deceived, God made known His will to them with the miraculous flowers that blossomed from Joseph’s staff.]30

By omitting the presence of other figures, such as the spurned suitors, Blancus directly visualises Gracián’s statement that out of all men, none but Joseph could be chosen as husband of the Virgin. This is a direct employment of the succinct, limited and mnemonic “format” of the emblem; the cooperation of Blancus’s engraving and Gracián’s text works to show that there are no other men present in the scene because no other man could be selected as Mary’s spouse.

Blancus’ representation diverges from the established devotional tradition surrounding the marriage of Mary and Joseph, which developed rapidly with the spread of apocryphal

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narratives.\textsuperscript{31} It also, as will be seen, communicates social views of sacramental marriage, particularly those which emerged following the Council of Trent.

In order to fill the void of Scriptural information regarding the marriage of Joseph and Mary and of the life of the Holy Family, a number of apocryphal narratives were composed which take the relationship of Mary and Joseph, and the daily life of the Holy Family, as a significant focus.\textsuperscript{32} Such tales may have emerged in the midst of anxiety surrounding the legitimacy of Christ’s line or the Holy Family’s suitability as a model for families. They may certainly have held a devotional function, or served as a means for inspiring husbands, wives and families in their relationships with one another. Without a doubt, they have greatly informed the ways in which the marriage of Mary and Joseph have been depicted visually.

These texts often give significant detail to the betrothal and marriage of Mary and Joseph. The \textit{Protoevangelium of James}, which dates from sometime after 130 CE and is purported to be written by the apostle St James the Less, makes distinct reference to Joseph’s divine selection as Mary’s spouse.\textsuperscript{33} It notes that widowers are specifically sought as potential spouses for the Virgin who, at the age of three, was consecrated to the temple, something that was historically only permissible for boys.\textsuperscript{34} One widower is chosen from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and they are called to enter the temple carrying staffs; the man from whose staff a dove erupts is to be the husband of Mary.\textsuperscript{35} This sign also features in the \textit{Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew} (c. 600) which, based heavily on the second-century \textit{Infancy Gospel of Thomas}, sought as its main

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item The term “apocryphal” is used to refer to texts which focus on Scriptural themes, and particularly on the life of Christ, but which are not regarded as divinely inspired and are therefore not part of the Biblical canon. Most of the apocryphal texts referenced here have been sourced from J. K. Elliott, \textit{The Apocryphal New Testament: a collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). For an introduction and full text of the \textit{Protoevangelium of James}, see pp. 48-67. For introduction and full text of the \textit{Infancy Gospel of Thomas}, see 68-83. For introduction and some of the text of \textit{Pseudo-Matthew}, see 84-99.\textsuperscript{32}
\item The historical and informational gap between the account of the finding of the Child Jesus in the temple and the commencement of Jesus’ public ministry has been termed “the hidden life”. Perhaps in an effort to make Christ and the Holy Family more relevant for everyday families, apocryphal literature notably focuses on this period in the life of Christ.\textsuperscript{33} The \textit{Protoevangelium} is one of the earliest non-canonical writings. Despite the fact that it is an apocryphon, it may contain genuine details that may lead to an understanding of how Christians of the period understood the Holy Family. This text has notably influenced Church liturgy, leading to the institution of the Roman memorial of Sts Joachim and Anne, parents of Mary (July 26), and the memorial of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple (November 21). See Joseph T. Lienhard, “St Joseph in Early Christianity: Devotion and Theology”, \textit{Joseph of Nazareth Through the Centuries}, ed. Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S. F. S. (Philadelphia: St Joseph’s University Press, 2011): 18-19; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “St Joseph in Matthew’s Gospel”, \textit{Joseph of Nazareth through the Centuries}, ed. Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S. F. S (Philadelphia: St Joseph’s University Press, 2011): 6.\textsuperscript{34}
\item Filas, \textit{Joseph, the man closest to Jesus}, 1962: 32
\item Zuffetti, \textit{L’uomo dei sette silenzi}, 2012: 15.
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objectives to substantiate the virgin birth and to give evidence of Christ’s divinity. The author explains that in order to find a suitable spouse for Mary the priest calls all unmarried men to bring their staffs to the temple, saying:

“…the man from the point of whose staff a dove shall come forth and fly toward heaven and in whose hand the staff, when given back, shall exhibit this sign, to him let Mary be delivered to be kept”.

The *Golden Legend*, which was written by Jacobus de Voragine in the thirteenth century and which combines narratives of the lives of the saints with liturgical and religious instruction, describes Mary as having been raised and instructed by the temple elders. In anticipation of her marriage, the temple elders receive divine instruction to summon all the unmarried but marriageable men of the house of David, from whom the spouse of Mary will be selected when his staff bursts into flower.

Blancus’ presentation of Joseph and Mary in isolation diverges from many visual depictions of the Marriage of the Virgin, which tend to feature within visual narratives and life cycles of Jesus and Mary. Such works generally follow the established pattern of presenting Mary supported by female attendants and Joseph often flanked by men, who frequently bear staffs and sometimes clap Joseph on the back at the moment the union is solemnised. Giotto’s fresco of the scene (Plate 1.5), completed around 1305, is a pertinent example of this. The fresco, which is situated in Padua’s Scrovegni chapel and is closely based on the *Golden Legend*, includes eight men, who watch and comment excitedly on the scene. Seven of them hold their useless staffs, one breaking his over his knee in a graceful gesture. None of the men appears frustrated or angry. Whilst the man directly behind Joseph raises his hand, Klapisch-Zuber stresses that this is in fact the depiction of the *compater anuli*, a popular Italian custom which


involves landing a heavy clap on the bridegroom’s back at the moment of consent.41 This gesture is echoed in Domenico Ghirlandaio’s fresco scene of the Marriage of the Virgin (Plate 1.6.), completed between 1486 and 1490 for the Tornabuoni chapel of Santa Maria Novella in Florence.42 The fresco presents the ceremony taking place against an ornate backdrop with the use of arches, columns, and linear perspective drawing the viewer’s eye to the figures of Mary, Joseph, and the priest who are placed slightly off-centre. These central figures are surrounded by a crowd of onlookers: men and women survey the scene, children feature in the foreground and a small group of musicians play in the background.

Ghirlandaio’s pupil, Bartolomeo di Giovanni, also incorporates the gesture of the compater anuli in his painting of the predella for Ghirlandaio’s altarpiece, completed between 1486 and 1489 for the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence (Plate 1.7.).43 While the women standing behind Mary are completely composed, the male observers are depicted in a frenzy: one of the men breaks his staff while others raise their fists, one man dropping his staff as he does so. A group of observers is also included in Pietro Perugino’s scene of the Marriage of the Virgin (Plate 1.8.).44 This altarpiece was completed in 1504 for the chapel of St Joseph in Perugia’s Cathedral of San Lorenzo, and its patron was the confraternity of St Joseph, which had been established in 1487 by Bernardino da Feltre, a Franciscan Observantist well-known for his devotion to Joseph.45 The work distinctly parallels in its organisation and proportionality the similar, well-known composition produced by Raphael during the same year.46 The priest, Mary and Joseph stand in the temple foreground surrounded by onlookers on either side. Women stand behind Mary, talking among themselves, while the men behind Joseph are similarly animated with the young man in the centre of the group breaking a staff over his knee in a conceivable, though graceful, act of frustration. Their elaborate hats, brightly coloured clothing and hose contrast against Joseph’s simpler, voluminous robes and his bare feet, perhaps as an indication of his virtue.

45 The ring was acquired by Perugia in 1486; perhaps the city’s acquisition of the ring was the stimulus for the creation of the confraternity. See Wisch, “Re-Viewing the Image of Confraternities in Renaissance Italy”, 2003: 17; Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 26; Wilson, “Some Further Evidence”, 2006: 908.
Perugino depicts the exact moment of nuptial union in which Joseph places the ring on Mary’s finger; this is described by Charlene Villaseñor Black as an “unusual detail”.\textsuperscript{47} This detail would have been of particular relevance to the confraternity in Perugia and communicates the significance of Josephine devotion there. The chapel for which this artwork was commissioned was the location of the ring of the Betrothal, one of the few known relics of St Joseph.\textsuperscript{48} The ring itself was venerated in Tuscany as early as 1000, and was only acquired by Perugia through \textit{furta sacra}, or “holy theft”.\textsuperscript{49} Historical study indicates, however, that such rings were not used during the time of Mary and Joseph.\textsuperscript{50} Images such as Perugino’s which were created specifically for confraternal chapels embody a particular function: they not only make the devotional cult more concrete, but also indicate that liturgy and ritual are a prominent preoccupation for the laity.

This particular detail also appears in Girolamo Marchesi’s \textit{The Marriage of St Joseph and the Virgin Mary} (Plate 1.9.), completed in 1523 for the high altar of the church of San Giuseppe di Via Galliera in Bologna.\textsuperscript{51} The marriage is here performed within an ornate interior, with the vertical lines of the columns and arches drawing the viewer’s focus to the couple and the large group of spectators. Six \textit{putti} are grouped above them, four standing upon cloud and holding a dove, and two descending upon Mary and Joseph, holding wreaths in their outstretched hands.

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\item \textsuperscript{48} Black, \textit{Creating the Cult of St Joseph}, 2006: 164, n. 22.
\item \textsuperscript{49} In his study on \textit{furta sacra}, Patrick Geary writes that such thefts were alleged or perpetrated by members of religious or secular communities as a means of alleviating a particular crisis. The ring, which was the subject of strong conflict between the cities of Chiusi and Perugia, was stolen from Chiusi only thirty years before Raphael’s painting of the Betrothal was commissioned; the inclusion of the ring in Raphael’s and Perugino’s artworks can be interpreted as an overt affirmation of Perugia’s authority to claim ownership of the ring. Filas, \textit{Joseph, the man closest to Jesus}, 1962: 525; Patrick J. Geary, \textit{Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978): xiii; Robin Wagner-Pacifici, \textit{The Art of Surrender: Decomposing Sovereignty at Conflict’s End} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005): 54.
\item \textsuperscript{50} The ring featured among multiple staffs claimed to be borne by Joseph during the flight into Egypt, swaddling clothes thought to be foot-coverings, a grey hemp girdle accompanied by a Latin inscription reading, “This is the girdle that girded Joseph, spouse of Mary”, and even fragments of his body. Particular information is known about the girdle: it was brought to France from the East in the thirteenth century by a Crusader, Sire de Joinville, and a chapel was built in order to house it. The girdle was destroyed in 1688, and the only guarantee of its authenticity is the “noble character” of its original owner. Filas, \textit{Joseph, the man closest to Jesus}, 1962: 525-527; Wisch, “Re-Viewing the Image of Confraternities in Renaissance Italy”, 2003: 17.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Wilson, \textit{St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art}, 2001: pl. 11. Wilson is the only author to have discussed this work as a St Joseph altarpiece and to observe the inclusion of the sibyl and prophet, the crowns, which she describes in reference to Sixtus IV’s promulgation of the Josephine cult, and the prophet’s gesture. She is also the first to draw correlation between these motifs and Joseph’s cult, particularly in relation to Joseph’s invocation as spouse of Mary. See Wilson, “Francesco Vecellio’s \textit{Presepio} for San Giuseppe, Belluno: Aspects and Overview of the Cult and Iconography of St Joseph in Pre-Tridentine Art”, \textit{Venezia Cinquecento}, VI:1, Jan-June, 1996, pp. 39-74; Wilson, \textit{St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art}, 2001: 25-27.
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In this scene, Mary and Joseph are again surrounded by many figures, some of them definitively anachronistic. A sibyl-like woman is seated in the foreground, looking beyond the composition and equipped with a writing tablet, a putto accompanying her at her right shoulder. A blind, praying man, reminiscent of a prophet, mirrors her at the right edge of the image field. Behind this man, another man gestures towards the sibyl and to the putti above, his extended arms directing focus to the centre of the work.

The incorporation of elements of popular custom and cultural allegory into illustrations of the Marriage of the Virgin emphasises not only a freedom of interpretation, but also places the marriage scene within a distinctly Italian context. Representing the scene in such a way would have rendered the Marriage more relatable to the works’ original audiences. Seeing Mary, Joseph and the surrounding figure dressed in identifiable garb and making gestures or performing rituals that were culturally relevant would have encouraged the audiences to identify more closely with Mary and Joseph and with Blancus’s overt depiction of their marriage as solemn and sacramental.

Renaissance marriages were essentially an interplay of Roman law and custom, Jewish and Christian practices, and contemporary power politics. Although the Council of Florence had defined marriage as the seventh sacrament of the Church in 1439, there was little unity regarding its celebration. Many Italian laypeople interpreted marriage as a social rather than as a religious affair, and as a public rather than private matter, thus leading to the celebration of extravagant wedding ceremonies. Social status, accumulation of wealth and inheritance were prioritised, and the only requisite for a valid marriage was mutual consent. Marriage was primarily a legal institution, with financial and social importance, and so it was not unusual for couples to exchange vows, documents, and money without even entering a church.

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54 Trevor Dean & K. J. P. Lowe (eds.) *Marriage in Italy, 1300-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 2. The authors emphasise that marriages were seen as an opportunity for entertainment and a vital means of gaining publicity, displaying familial hospitality, and repaying debts and obligations. At the 1513 union of the patrician Foscari and Venier families, for example, more than 500 guests were in attendance and the banquet was followed by music, dancing and theatrical entertainment lasting into the early morning. M. Sanudo, *I diarii*, ed. R. Fulin et al., vol. XVI, cols. 206-7, 2 May 1513. As cited in
The Protestant and Catholic reformations of the sixteenth century promoted marriage as a significant issue. The Council of Trent sought to emphasise the sacramental nature of marriage, its indissolubility, its subjection to ecclesiastical authority, and the norms for its celebration; most notably, it insisted upon the presence of a parish priest at the ceremony, whereas previously a marriage was publicised by banns, witnesses, and registration. At the twenty-fourth session of the Council, held on November 11, 1563, it was stipulated that a marriage could only be celebrated after it had been publicly announced by the parish priest, and that it was essential the marriage be performed before the parish priest and before two or three witnesses.

Blancus’ presentation of Joseph, Mary, and the priest as completely alone distinctly departs from the established iconographic representation of this scene and at the same time strives to align itself with Tridentine reforms. Blancus’ highly intimate, simple scene, devoid of extraneous figures and allegorical motifs, portrays the marriage of Mary and Joseph as sacramental in that it is conducted by a priest and mutually agreed upon by both parties, elements which were prescribed clearly by the Council of Trent.

Blancus’ choice to not depict witnesses in the scene may seem contradictory to social custom and to the newly-emerged requirements of sacramental marriages. I would argue instead that the openness of the scene invites and allows room for the participation of the viewer, who thereby becomes a privileged witness to the marriage. Not only does this artistic choice effectively communicate Gracián’s portrayal of Joseph as the only possible spouse for Mary, but it also further encourages audience participation. While the abovementioned works are placed within ornate interiors or in temple forecourts, presenting Mary and Joseph surrounded by often lavishly-dressed onlookers, Blancus depicts the marriage performed in isolation and in an unidentifiable setting, with God as both witness and celebrant. This instils in his engraving a visionary quality, presenting it to the viewer for contemplation; additionally, it conveys a sort of universality which would have made his work symbolic for a wider audience and would have reflected Zaragoza’s statement that the Summary should be written not solely for the benefit of the brethren, but for the good of souls and for the honour of the saint.

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57 A notice read during Mass on three successive Sundays by the priest announcing the marriage and providing an opportunity for the people to raise objections. See The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, 1978: 183.
59 The Council reinforced that the ministers of the sacrament were the marrying couple; the priest presided over the ceremony. The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, 1978: 184.
60 Gracián, Obras, 1616: 37.
Blancus further invites audience participation through the depiction of Mary’s foot breaking the image frame and thus entering the temporal space of the viewer, which does not occur in any of the other engravings within the book. As the Summary is itself intimate, by virtue of its size, it seems that Blancus sought to encourage a close connection between the audience and the image and a direct participation of the members of the confraternity. The audience is thereby not only viewing the image, but also becomes a witness to the event taking place in the scene.

Although the Summary portrays Joseph as exceptional, it also strives to humanise him and portray him as a model for everyday men in relationships with their wives. In this text, Joseph is not the reluctant, insecure man of apocryphal legend, nor the grandfatherly figure who sometimes features in artistic representations of the Holy Family. Andrea del Sarto’s Holy Family, completed around 1527 and held in the collection of the Galleria Palatina in Florence (Plate 1.10.), and Perino del Vaga’s 1540 Holy Family held in Vienna’s Liechtenstein Museum (Plate 1.11.), both relegate the sleeping, grey-haired Joseph to the shadowy edge of the frame.61 These works respectively show him resting upon a pillar and holding his staff, which seems necessary to support his old, weak body.62 In contrast, Blancus portrays him as straight-backed and muscular, gripping his staff firmly and looking directly at Mary, albeit somewhat nervously. The directness of his gaze, his strong posture and his clearly muscular legs, well-defined by his long boots and revealed by the short length of his tunic, lend him a quality of power and virility.63 This is a man undoubtedly in the prime of his life. Such a depiction presents for the brethren of the Archconfraternity a tangible model of masculinity and a relatable guide for the relationship husbands should hold with their wives.

Blancus’ depiction of Joseph as strong and virile runs in accordance with Gracián’s description of the saint’s youth and upbringing. Gracián writes that Joseph, although being born of a noble line, was born in poverty, and so “it eventually became necessary for him to leave his small

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61 As will be discussed in chapter 5, the sleeping or meditative pose denotes Joseph’s receptivity to the word of God communicated in dreams. Julian Brooks, Denise Allen and Xavier F. Solomon, Andrea del Sarto: the Renaissance workshop in action (Los Angeles: Getty, 2015): 125; Johann Kréalnner, Liechtenstein Museum: the princely collections (Munich: Prestel, 2004): 32. See Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 43, 80, for discussions of other representations of Joseph by these two artists, both probably occurring within a cult context.

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63 A precedent can be found in Correggio’s altarpiece for the St Joseph confraternity in Parma; in her discussion of this artwork, Carolyn Wilson states that the upward movement of drapery reveals Joseph’s powerful legs and unites, in an extraordinary way, “the angelic Joseph and his celestial guide”. See Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 74.
patrimony, go to Jerusalem, and learn the art of carpentry in order to support himself and to participate in the sacrifices of the temple. This description readily conveys to the reader particular qualities they can associate with the saint and perhaps even identify within their own selves: a knowledge of poverty and struggle, hard work and self-sufficiency, piety and a commitment to devotional and religious practices. Further, Joseph is described in the Summary as young and vigorous, qualities which Gracián implies by paralleling him with Joseph of Egypt and casting him as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. These qualities also communicate the ideal of manly strength, or virtus, which was depicted throughout literature as the goal of both male and female saints; the Summary, in its visual-textual representation of Joseph’s physical power, indicates that he has fulfilled this ideal.

In addition to operating in accordance with Scriptural narrative, the portrayal of a young and masculine Joseph taps into social custom at the time of Mary and Joseph, and into the Renaissance understanding of the meaning of aesthetics and beauty. As Larry M. Toschi writes, Scripture’s use of the word “betrothed” naturally promotes the image of Mary and Joseph as “two youths of ordinary marriageable age.” In the time of Mary and Joseph, betrothals, which designated a formal exchange of consent and money between the young man and the father of the bride, were usually entered into when the bride was between the ages of twelve and thirteen.

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64 E su neccessitato vendere quel poco patrimonio, che aveva in Bethlehem, e imparare l’arte de legnaiuolo, con la quale si pose ad abitare in Gerusalemme per sostenersi, e per participare de i sacrifici del santo Tempio. Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 6.

65 These typological connections find their genesis in the Matthean genealogy, which titles Joseph as the son of Jacob (Matt 1:16). The name “Joseph”, which can be translated as “Yahweh increases” or “let him increase” (Gen 30:24), is a conceivable allegorical reference to the humble submission of the two Josephs to God’s will. Throughout all of Scripture, the title “son of Jacob” is used only to describe these two figures. Joseph of Nazareth is identified by Bernard of Clairvaux as the “true son of David”, with this sonship leading to his divine selection as recipient of the Word and forming a patriarchal link between the Old and New Testaments. Bernard also parallels the two figures in their purity and obedience, and in the divine intelligence bestowed upon them. The Franciscan Ubertine of Casale (d. c. 1329) presents Joseph as “the key to the Old Testament, in whom the patriarchal and prophetic dignity attained to its promised fruit.” Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 105, 111; Larry M. Toschi, Joseph in the New Testament: with Redemptoris Custos, the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II on Saint Joseph (Santa Cruz: Guardian of the Redeemer Books, 1991): 334; Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 4; Bolger Foster, The Iconography of St Joseph, 1978: 22; Edward Healy Thompson, The Life and Glories of St Joseph (North Carolina: TAN Books, 2013): 15; Chester N. Scoville, Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 57-8.


67 Toschi, Joseph in the New Testament, 1991: 394. The Navarre commentary on Matthew’s Gospel notes that as it was quite usual for people to marry within their clan, it can be concluded that Mary belonged to the house of David; however, Jesus’ ancestral and legal rights would have come from his father’s line and so he was recognised and titled “son of David” because Joseph was also “son of David”. See The Navarre Bible: St Matthew’s Gospel, in the Revised Standard Version and New Vulgate with a commentary by the Faculty of Theology, University of Navarre (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1988): 29.
and the bridegroom between fourteen and twenty-one years old.\textsuperscript{68} During the betrothal period, which generally lasted around a year, Mary and Joseph were already titled “husband” and “wife”,\textsuperscript{69} but could not live together or have sexual relations; this was especially true in Galilee, where the wife had to be taken as a virgin into her husband’s home.\textsuperscript{70} Aside from this, they would have held all rights pertaining to married couples. If Joseph died, Mary would be considered his widow and thus entitled to his inheritance, and if Mary was unfaithful she would be punished as an adulteress and could not remarry unless she obtained a bill of divorce.\textsuperscript{71} At the conclusion of this period the bride was taken to the husband’s family home in the second and definitive moment of the marriage rite.\textsuperscript{72} Matthew’s referring to Mary and Joseph as a betrothed couple, along with Luke’s statement that they are “espoused”, indicates that at the time of the Annunciation Mary and Joseph were not living together as man and wife but, as they had already exchanged consent, were married in the eyes of God and of the people.\textsuperscript{73} This portrayal of Joseph as a young man is strongly contrasted in apocryphal literature, where he is typically represented as elderly, at least sixty years’ Mary’s senior. The \textit{Protoevangelium of James} describes Joseph as still practicing as a carpenter yet well advanced in years.\textsuperscript{74} After

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\textsuperscript{69} Note the use of the term \textit{gynē}, “wife”, in Matt 1:20-24. See Brown, \textit{The Birth of the Messiah}, 1997: 123.

\textsuperscript{70} Toschi, \textit{Joseph in the New Testament}, 1991: 394; Brown, \textit{The Birth of the Messiah}, 1997: 124, 207. Brown indicates the difficulty in applying the distinction in Galilean custom to Mary and Joseph. He notes first that it is commonly believed this distinction arose out of fear that occupying Roman troops might rape or seduce a betrothed virgin, and so this indicates the custom may well have come about from the post-70 A.D. period. Second, he draws attention to Matthew’s indication that Mary and Joseph live and have their home in Bethlehem in Judaea (2:11), and that Joseph, when returning with his family to Israel after the death of Herod, initially thinks of resettling in Judaea (2:22). Therefore, if there were a regional difference in custom, Mary and Joseph would likely have adhered to Judaean practice which allowed them to spend time alone together as a betrothed couple. Brown notes, however, that Matthew’s implicit tone of scandal suggests a connection with the Galilean practice.

\textsuperscript{71} Michael D. Griffin (O.C.D.), \textit{Saint Joseph: a theological introduction} (Montreal: Oratoire Saint-Joseph, 1996): 6. This is quite possibly what is conveyed in Joseph’s consideration of divorce. As Mary has, by all manner of appearances, been unfaithful, Joseph as her husband has the right to have her condemned. He instead begins to set about to divorce her “quietly”. This action on his part seems designed to protect Mary from shame while at the same time operating as a fulfilment of his rights as her husband.

\textsuperscript{72} Toschi, \textit{Joseph in the New Testament}, 1991: 394; Danieli, \textit{Incontri con San Giuseppe}, 2009: 10. Examples of the marriage celebration are found in Scripture, such as the feast of the ten maidens (Matt 25:1-13), or the account of the marriage at Cana (Matt 2:1-11).


\textsuperscript{74} The consistent representation of Joseph as an elderly man in apocryphal literature seems to be focused on allaying any speculation that he could be considered the natural father of Christ. In truth, if he had been this old, he would not have appeared to be Jesus’ natural father in the public eye, something which Scripture makes clear was assumed. Furthermore, if Joseph were an older man, this would have defied his evident call to protect the reputation of Mary and Jesus, and ultimately, to shield the mystery of the Incarnation.
his selection to take Mary into his home as his “ward”, Joseph protests, his words emphasising the age disparity between him and Mary and also revealing something of social expectation and convention: “I have sons, and am old; she is but a girl. I object lest I should become a laughing-stock to the sons of Israel.”  

Joseph’s words indicate that a union between a young woman and an old man was perceived as unnatural and a subject of ridicule and it is only at the high priest’s threatening of divine vengeance that he submits.

Joseph’s old age is also described in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, whose account of the Marriage of the Virgin emphasises Joseph’s humanness and depicts him as an incompetent husband in a portrayal which directly contrasts Mary’s virtue. He is described here as an old man who has been cast off, and when he is chosen he expresses no willingness to wed Mary and instead is instructed by the priests to take her. The age disparity between the couple again motivates Joseph’s reluctance to wed Mary, and his dismay at the miraculous conception of Christ indicates that he also seems to lack the courage and wisdom necessary to fulfil his role as husband.

Gracián departs from such representations in the *Summary*, attributing to Mary and Joseph the words of Isaiah: “For as a young man marries a young woman” (62:5). Further, he is explicit in regarding artistic representations of an elderly Joseph as merely expressions of allegory rather than of fact. These works, he states, illustrate Joseph’s wisdom and prudence, and were designed to prevent people from thinking that two people of such beauty and youth could not possibly live together in complete purity.

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75 *Protoevangelium of James*, 1993: 9:2. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993: 61. Joseph’s reaction, though designed to convey fear and insecurity, also presents a desire to live in obscurity and an unwillingness to offend the Law. His representation in this text, while quite possibly intended to demean him, also emphasises a clear human nature and distinct, real emotions of doubt, insecurity, and a desire for self-preservation and the protection of reputation.


78 It is indicated in the text that Joseph is a grandfather, and that his grandchildren are already older than the fourteen-year-old Mary. Filas, *Joseph, the man closest to Jesus*, 1962: 32.


81 Welleda Muller writes that until the Renaissance, representations of Joseph were stable: he was an old man remaining behind the Virgin and Child. This follows Payan, who states that the presence of an elderly man beside the Virgin was enough to indicate Joseph. See Welleda Muller, *The Representations of Elderly People in the Scenes of Jesus’ Childhood in Tuscan Paintings, 14th – 16th Centuries: Images of Intergeneration Relationships* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2016: 48, and Paul Payan, *Joseph: une image de la paternité dans l’Occident medieval* (Aubier: Collection historique, 2006): 124.

The perception of a young and handsome Joseph stands as a reflection of the Renaissance, Neo-Platonic belief that inner goodness and external beauty existed in harmony, which thus leads to an integration and unity of the inner and outer selves of man. Sixteenth-century Italian plays, such as Giovanni Maria Cecchi’s *L’Assiuolo* (1549) or Girolamo Bargagli’s *La Pellegrina* (c. 1564-8), portrayed old husbands who were ridiculed while their young wives enjoyed the company of young lovers. This age gap likely strengthened the patriarchal mentality, but it also emphasises the perceived integral connection of beauty and goodness; the elderly husband, unable to satisfy his young wife, is “unmanned”, lacking in virtue, and presented as a sort of comic relief. In a similar vein, portrayals of the elderly Joseph as a subject of ridicule work to convey him as lacking in masculine virtue or goodness.

This belief in the interconnectedness between beauty and goodness is clearly expressed in Baldesare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* (1528), in which he writes that “the good and the beautiful are somehow one and the same thing”. By this token, the Summary’s emblematic representation of Joseph as young and handsome is a direct indication of his goodness and virtue. By presenting Joseph as physically attractive, perhaps Gracián wanted to ensure there would be no means by which Joseph’s virtue and holiness could be denied.

The subject of Joseph’s masculinity was approached by Rosso Fiorentino in his *Marriage of the Virgin* (Plate 1.12.), painted in 1523 for the family altar of banker Carlo Ginori in San Lorenzo. Rosso’s composition bears similarity to Girolamo Marchesi’s as Mary and Joseph are placed in the midst of a somewhat anachronistic crowd of spectators, including sibyl-like women, one of whom holds a book as a conceivable reference to prophetic announcement and of the coming of the Messiah, and the Dominican saint Vincent Ferrer who gestures towards the couple with his right arm. Zaira Zuffetti notes that the representation of Joseph in the work of Rosso Fiorentino was viewed as scandalous, as it departed completely from the established iconography of Joseph as an elderly man. Rosso, who has been described as the “eccentric standard-bearer for the most fearless and experimental Mannerism”, departs from convention in presenting to the viewer a handsome, blonde, athletic, and even heroic Joseph.

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who is paralleled by the very young, very contemporary Mary. Rosso’s challenge to the iconography of Joseph as elderly and even frail casts the saint in a new light: not only is he youthful and virile, but by his youthfulness and virility Joseph is clearly capable to fill the roles of husband of Mary and father of Jesus. Further, Rosso’s incorporation of the anachronistic sibyls and saint places the union of Mary and Joseph beyond the temporal, establishing it as an “eternal and indeed fore-ordained union.” This quality is established even more significantly in Rosso’s inscription of the tetragrammaton on the priest’s headdress, which, as David Franklin argues, emphasises that the union of Mary and Joseph is willed by God. These qualities are paralleled by Blancus. The attention Blancus gives to Joseph’s physical strength, primarily through the straightness of his back and staff, portrays him as fully capable to assume the responsibilities of the roles bestowed on him by God. As in the case of Rosso’s artwork, the gesturing of Blancus’s figures and the inclusion of the tetragrammaton communicates the union of Mary and Joseph as pre-ordained and even witnessed by the Father.

The Summary indicates that Joseph, by virtue of his marriage with Mary, shared with her in her virginity. While the chaste marriage of Mary and Joseph has attracted very little attention in terms of its role as a marriage model, in the twelfth century it was employed as the foundation of the development of an ecclesiastical model of marital union. It was, however, on some level non-imitable. In the words of Dyan Elliott:

The union of Mary and Joseph was undoubtedly the most celebrated of virginal marriages: however, all of the circumstances around their union, particularly their divinely inspired fulfilment of the Augustinian goods, were beyond imitation. And yet…their marriage was the touchstone for determining the norms of Christian marriages.

Blancus’s engraving conforms to the traditional iconographic depiction of Joseph’s virginity. Joseph carries a blossoming staff, Mary and Joseph do not make physical contact, and their

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91 Scripture does not make any reference to Mary’s taking of a vow of virginity.
postures are mirrored. The iconography of the flowering staff finds its basis in the Book of Numbers, with Aaron’s selection as high priest from among all the tribes of Israel indicated by his rod bursting into flower (Num 17:16-20). The iconographic subject of Joseph bearing a blooming staff emerged during the medieval period, with the staff later being replaced by a lily, the symbol of purity and chastity. The blossoming staff became a feature in apocryphal narratives of the Marriage of the Virgin, particularly within the *Golden Legend*, and Gracián adopts this symbol in his own writing where he states that when all men of marriageable age from Mary’s tribe came together in the temple “Joseph’s staff flowered and a white dove appeared over him”. Following from this, “they espoused to Joseph she who is the rod of Jesse’s stem, from which blossomed the flower, Jesus of Nazareth (Isaiah 1:11), and she who was sanctified by the white dove of the Holy Spirit.” Further, he presents Joseph as having been a virgin at the time of his marriage to Mary and contradicts any supposition of a previous marriage, writing that on the night of their wedding Joseph and Mary “opened their hearts to one another, and with their mutual consent they made a vow of absolute chastity and remained virgins.”

The flowering staff thus became an identifying feature of Mary’s spouse and was frequently incorporated in visual scenes of the Marriage of the Virgin, with Giotto’s fresco standing as a prominent example. It is unclear whether Blancus was influenced by Voragine directly, or by Voragine through Giotto, but what is evident is that Giotto’s portrayal of the marriage stood as a model for Blancus’ own representation. Blancus’ illustration of Joseph holding a flowering staff directly communicates Gracián’s words, draws a connection with the preceding literary and artistic tradition, and further identifies Joseph’s selection as Mary’s spouse and his participation in her virginity.

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95 Filas, *Joseph, the man closest to Jesus*, 1962: 80.


97 Onde diedero per sposa a Giospef quella, la quale (è la venga delle radice di Jesse, onde nacque il fiore Gesù Nazareno) e su santificata per la colomba candida dello Spirito Santo. Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 7.


99 The presence of the dove, and the fact that it faces Mary, can also reasonably be interpreted as a sign of Mary’s sanctification by the Holy Spirit, to which Gracián gives description.
Blancus further emphasises the virginal and chaste marriage of Joseph and Mary through his depiction of Joseph extending his hand towards Mary’s but not touching her. In this way, he maintains a deference which Sara Nair James argues is implied in the language of the local Italian sacra rappresentazione, and which signifies the chastity of their marriage and addresses the history of debate among churchmen as to whether a marriage could be both valid and celibate.\textsuperscript{100}

Discussion and questioning of Joseph’s virginity seems to go hand-in-hand with considerations of his masculinity and of the validity of his marriage with Mary. In the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, the fact that Mary makes a vow of perpetual virginity, thus becoming, in Lienhard’s words, “a Christian nun long before nuns existed”, was seen to deny the existence of a “true marriage” with Joseph.\textsuperscript{101} Mary’s choice of a chaste marriage operates in clear contradiction to the fundamental role of sexual intercourse within marriage and to the primal importance of generating children and thereby preserving the family name. In presenting Mary and Joseph’s union as more of a guardianship than a marriage, Pseudo-Matthew contradicts the canonical gospel narrative that, through its references to Joseph and Mary as husband and wife and as Jesus’ parents, presents their marital union as valid even if it was unconsummated.\textsuperscript{102}

Blancus draws further reference to the virginity of Joseph and Mary, and thus by extension to the validity of their virginal marriage, through their mirrored gestures. The similarities in their stance and gestures emphasise mutual consent, and perhaps reflects the use of Mary and Joseph’s virginal marriage to justify the argument for consent as the essence of a valid marriage.\textsuperscript{103} Further, it reflects Gracián’s description of the virginal and chaste union Joseph entered into with Mary when he consented to take her as his wife.\textsuperscript{104}

Such compositional symmetry is prefigured in earlier depictions of the Marriage of the Virgin. Fra Angelico emphasises symmetry and mirroring in the Marriage scene depicted on the predella of his Coronation of the Virgin (Plate 1.13.), completed around 1432 and held in the Uffizi Gallery.\textsuperscript{105} In this scene, the similarities in Mary and Joseph’s gestures, with one hand extended and the other folded over the stomach, draws emphasis upon their mutuality and union. Further, the use of repeated colours, particularly blue, gold, and pink, successfully works

\textsuperscript{100} James, “The Exceptional Role of St Joseph”, 2016: 90.
\textsuperscript{101} Lienhard, “St Joseph in Early Christianity”, 2011: 19.
\textsuperscript{102} Filas, Joseph, the man closest to Jesus, 1962: 34.
\textsuperscript{103} Cullum, “‘Give Me Chastity’”, 2014: 229.
\textsuperscript{104} Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 93.
\textsuperscript{105} Silvia Malaguzzi, Fra Angelico (Florence: Giunti, 2003): 23.
to create harmony within the composition and to create parallels between the men and women standing either side of the couple. The use of stylistic elements, particularly body language and gesture, to convey harmony is something that Blancus clearly employs in his emphasis of Mary and Joseph’s consensual marital union and shared virginity.

By the twelfth century belief in Joseph’s virginity was already widespread, through the efforts of the Church Fathers and theologians. One of the earliest discussions of Joseph’s virginity is found in the writings of Origen (d. 294) who, in his *Commentary on Matthew*, stresses that Joseph could not have been a perpetual virgin, as Jesus and Mary had to be the “first fruits” of virginity. Additionally, he ascribes children to Joseph, indicating that that the “brothers of the Lord” are Joseph’s sons by his first marriage.106 Saint Ambrose (d. 397), the bishop of Milan, emphasised that the validity of the marriage between Mary and Joseph is grounded in Roman law which stresses the constitution of marriage by consent rather than by consummation.107 In his *Commentary on Luke*, Ambrose argues that marriage itself is not constituted by the loss of virginity, but by its solemnisation and celebration, and therefore Joseph and Mary could have enjoyed a true marriage without their virginity being compromised.108

Saint Jerome’s (d. 420) discussion in support of Joseph’s virginity is also significant, particularly in his refutation of previous writers. Jerome notably challenges Helvidius (4th century), who claimed that Joseph and Mary had normal marital relations after Jesus was born, and Saints Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis (d. 403), and Hilary of Poitiers (c. 367), who argue that Jesus’ “brothers” are children of Joseph from a previous marriage.109 Jerome presents Joseph’s virginity as dependent on that of Mary, arguing that this voluntary surrender of his marriage rights made him a true co-operator in preparing, along with Mary, to welcome Christ into the world.110 This is paralleled in Gracián’s description of the “mutual consent” entered into by Mary and Joseph on their wedding night; therefore, Joseph’s virginity is entered into as a free choice and not settled on reluctantly.111

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Saint Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) also asserted the validity of Joseph and Mary’s marriage and stressed Joseph’s perpetual virginity. Like Ambrose he uses terminology from Roman law, and stresses in his Sermon I that “Joseph then was not the less his [Jesus’] father, because he knew not the mother of our Lord, as though concupiscence and not conjugal love constitutes the marriage bond.” Thus, for Augustine, it was matrimonial love and not intercourse that validated such a union, and this view is emphasised by Gracián in his discussion of the true union of Mary and Joseph. Although their union was not consummated, the abstinence from intercourse does not invalidate their marital relationship. Rather, their union is upheld and strengthened through their mutual consent and their expression of love for one another, qualities which are depicted visually by Blancus in his engraving.

In his work *De Bono Coniugali* (The Goods of Marriage), composed in 401, Augustine delineates three particular “goods” existing within Christian marriages:

> Bonum igitur nuptiarum per omnes gentes atqueomnes homines in causa generandi est et in fide castitatis; quod autem ad populum Dei pertinet, etiam in sanctitate sacrament...

> [The value of marriage, therefore, for all races and all people, lies in the objective of procreation and the faithful observance of chastity. For the people of God, however, it lies also in the sanctity of the sacrament…]^{114}

And in *De Nuptis et Concupiscentia*, he writes:

> Omne itaque nuptiarum bonum impletum est in illis parentibus Christi, proles, fides, sacramentum. Prolem cognoscimus ipsum Dominum Iesum, fidem, quia nullum adulterium, sacramentum, quia nullum divortium. Solus ibi nuptialis concubitus non fuit...

> [Every good of marriage was fulfilled in the parents of Christ: offspring, loyalty, and the sacrament. We recognise the offspring in our Lord Jesus Christ himself, the loyalty in that no adultery occurred, and the sacrament (that is, the


113 Augustine of Hippo, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Volume VI: St Augustine: Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, and Homilies on the Gospels, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Cosimo, 2007): 252. See also Lienhard, “St Joseph in Early Christianity”, 2011: 24. Lienhard references Augustine’s discussion of the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians, in which it is written: “I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none” (1 Cor 7:29). Using this verse, Augustine claims that if a couple does surrender intercourse, they do not automatically cease to be husband and wife, as they by mutual agreement relinquish the satisfaction of the flesh but not their love for one another.

indissolubility), because of no divorce. Only conjugal intercourse did not take place…\textsuperscript{115}

These three goods of marriage, faith, children, and the sacrament (or irrevocability), stood as the basis for the ecclesial doctrine of marriage, and for centuries were regarded as necessary in all Christian marriages.\textsuperscript{116} Additionally, regarding the marriage of Joseph and Mary, Augustine states:

\textit{At ubi natus est ipse Rex omnium gentium, coepit dignitas virginalis a Matre Domini, quae et filium habere meruit, et corrumpi non meruit. Sic ergo erat illud coniugium, et sine nulla corruptione coniugium: sic quod caste uxor peperit, cur non caste maritus acciperet? Sicut enim caste coniux illa, sic ille caste maritus: et sicut illa caste mater, sic ille caste pater.}

[But when the King of all nations Himself was born, then began the honour of virginity with the mother of the Lord, who had the privilege of bearing a Son without any loss of her virgin purity. As that then was a true marriage, and a marriage free from all corruption, so why should not the husband chastely receive what his wife had chastely brought forth? For as she was a wife in chastity, so was he in chastity a husband; and as she was in chastity a mother, so was he in chastity a father.\textsuperscript{117}]

Joseph’s virginity, he claims, influenced the coming of Christ into the world. His free consent was essential in order for the virginal marriage to exist, as Mary could not possibly have been “ever-virgin” if Joseph had not freely agreed the same; additionally, Augustine stresses that Mary and Joseph were truly a married couple even though they did not have sexual relations.\textsuperscript{118} Thus, he argues the marriage of Joseph and Mary is both virginal and valid.

Saint Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) expressed that through Mary’s marriage to Joseph, “both virginity and wedlock are honoured in her person, in contradiction to those heretics who disparaged one or the other.”\textsuperscript{119} He also stressed Joseph’s perpetual virginity, indicating that


\textsuperscript{116} Mia Korpiola, \textit{Between Betrothal and Bedding: Marriage Formation in Spain 1200-1600} (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2009): 93.


\textsuperscript{119} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae} (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), IIIa, Q.29, art. 1. See also Michael J. Dodds, “The Teaching of Thomas Aquinas on the Mysteries of the Life of Christ”, \textit{Aquinas on
although Mary desired to take a vow of virginity before her marriage to Joseph, in her society the begetting of children was seen as a worship of God and so, having taken a husband in accordance with social custom she, “together with him”, took a vow of virginity. Gracián himself adopts this view in his discussion of the union of Mary and Joseph as true, perfect, and virginal.

The Summary’s presentation of a virginal Joseph and of a virginal marriage operates in direct contrast to prevailing social views of sexuality and masculinity. St Augustine’s famous plea for God to “give me chastity and continence, but not yet” resonates among modern audiences as the “natural” reaction of men to the Christian requirement to restrict and even forgo sexual activity. Vern Bullough states that as sexual performance typically embodied what it meant to be male in the medieval period, any failure to perform was not only a threat to a man’s masculinity but also to society.

This approach, however, has not always been the case. Cassandra Rhodes indicates that the majority of Anglo-Saxon hagiographic texts, regardless of context or date, depict male saints or spiritual models as chaste or virginal. Saints such as Thomas Cantilupe of Hereford (d. 1282) and the unofficial saints Richard Scrope of York (d. 1405) and John Dalderby of Lincoln (d. 1320) stand as evidence for this deepening interest in male chastity. Additionally, the development of stories featuring identifiable and imitable male figures who were also virgins, such as the fourteenth-century poem Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, indicates that there was an interest among laymen in masculine virginity and virtue.

Rhodes continues her argument with the statement:

120 Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1947: IIIa, Q.28, art. 4.
125 Gawain, who is in the beginning of the poem described as an exemplary and virtuous character (lines 636-39), later succumbs to spiritual and moral error in going against his word after being led by the weakness of his flesh. This weakness is, however, presented by Clare Kinney as “the inescapable condition of all men faced with female beguilements.” Gawain has unmanned himself, but at the same time has acted in accordance with what it means to be a man. Cullum, “Give Me Chastity”, 2014: 226; Clare R. Kinney, “The (Dis) Embodied Hero and the Signs of Manhood in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight”, Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages, ed. Clare A Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 50, 55.
Scholars of later medieval masculine virginity have identified male saints who were tested with carnal temptations, who used virginity to legitimise a break in royal succession, or who became virgins through a semantic association with tropes familiar from female virgin passiones.\(^\text{126}\)

Rhodes’s work suggests that, in some instances, saints were seen as the most perfect humans because of their virginity and thus became the ultimate models of human behaviour. More often than not, however, it appears that the tendency to feminise virginity meant that the issue of a male virgin was not clear-cut. Masculine virginity was so undefined in its own right that it could only be understood in reference to female virginity, and particularly in the case of Joseph it was difficult to see him as both a virgin and masculine.

Virgin saints were particularly glorified through the devotional importance given to mystical marriages. Commonplace in literature, these marriages tended to unite a female virginal saint with Christ, with Catherine of Alexandria and Catherine of Siena frequently chosen as subjects.\(^\text{127}\) A pertinent example is seen in Paris Bordone’s 1524 depiction of the mystical marriage of Saint Catherine of Alexandria (Plate 1.14.), currently held in private collection.\(^\text{128}\)

Here the infant Christ, held in the arm of his mother, offers a ring to Catherine, while the infant John the Baptist surveys the scene from the left corner of the frame. Joseph is seated in the centre. In contrast with the delicate features and radiant complexions of the surrounding figures, Joseph’s face is brown and bearded and his exposed right foreleg is powerful and muscular.\(^\text{129}\) He guides the bride’s hand to receive the ring, and thus is presented as an

\(^{126}\) Rhodes, “‘What, after all, is a male virgin?’”, 2011: 15.

\(^{127}\) A particularly revealing image of a mystical marriage is found in the writing of St Hermann of Steinfeld (d. 1240) who experienced a vision in which he was married to the Virgin Mary. In his vision Mary, who is a young girl of unsurpassed beauty, is brought to the saint by two angels, one of whom tells him “It is fitting that this brilliant virgin be married to you.” The angel then joins the two in marriage, saying to St Hermann: “I give you as wife this virgin, even as she had been married to Joseph. And you shall take the name of the husband even as you take the bride.” With this, Hermann takes both Joseph’s name and his spouse, and from this marriage he gains “encouragement, advice, consolation, instruction, and dearest friendship”. Not only does this vision seem to indicate Joseph as an unworthy, ill-fitting spouse of Mary, but it also strips the saint of all that identifies him: his marriage, his connection with Christ, even his name. See David Herlihy, “The Family and Religious Ideologies in Medieval Europe”, Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe, Historical Essays 1978-1991 ed. David Herlihy (Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, 1995): 168-169.


\(^{129}\) Significantly, Bordone’s depiction of Joseph’s muscular, exposed, bare foreleg connects him with other male saints, such as St Mark. For example, Tintoretto’s The Evangelists Mark and John (1557), at Santa Maria del Giglio in Venice, depicts Mark, who holds the Bible open with one hand and paints with the other, with an exposed, bare muscular leg and turning torso which distinctly contrasts the demure, boyish John writing calmly beside him. Robert Kiely, Blessed and Beautiful: Picturing the Saints (London: Yale University Press, 2010): 117.
intermediary reminiscent of a priest with the ring arguably symbolising the consensual union of Catherine with Christ.

Prior to the twelfth century, lay Christians were almost completely excluded from the realm of sanctity, particularly that communicated through literature and art. The thirteenth century saw a new approach to the relationship between marriage and sanctity, with married saints from earlier periods, such as Osith and Eustace, being adopted as imitable figures. Such an approach ultimately led to the view that a non-virgin could become a saint or beatus. This was achieved in part with the development of a marriage model based on consent, which marked a shift away from marriage as a social obligation to which women in particular had to conform in order to avoid the disappointment or anger of their family. In the case of non-virgin female saints, what appears to be consistently emphasised is that the marriage was consummated some time after the ceremony; for example, St Bridget of Sweden remained a virgin for two years after her marriage and Dorothy of Montau (d. 1394) for a fortnight. Vauchez notes that as the sexual act was frequently regarded as “fundamentally sinful” in that it might cause pleasure, married female saints practiced periodic continence and encouraged their husbands to practice sexual abstinence after the birth of a number of children.

In such scenarios, virginity is accepted and idealised as a mark of sainthood even in marriage. These “spiritual marriages” grew in number during the thirteenth century, perhaps as a result of the blossoming cult of the Virgin Mary. Generally, the wife is seen on some level as the “saviour” of her husband, tempering his carnal desires and motivating him towards a life of spiritual purity. An example of this is found in the life of Umilitá of Faenza (1226 – 1310). Born into a privileged family as Rosanna de Negustani, she is described in her Vitae as, from childhood, being “intent on divine obedience, occupying her time in constant prayer, and

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132 Vauchez, Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages, 2005: 382, fn. 499.
133 Several texts point to the three goods or triple purpose of Christian marriage (faith, children, and the sacrament), noting in passing that such marriages fulfil these aims. Vauchez, Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages, 2005: 382-3.
134 The depiction of Mary’s obedience to God became a means by which socially prescribed female roles could be reinforced. This obedience was outlined in the thirteenth-century wives’ manual, The Goodman of Paris, as prescriptive for a wife’s behaviour with her husband. With Mary portrayed in such a way, Joseph began to be presented as the head of the household to whom she submitted. The two devotional cults go hand-in-hand: as the cult of Joseph gained ground, it initiated the development of a humbler, more submissive Mary. Elliott, Spiritual Marriage, 1998: 177-79.
generous alms giving” and as wanting to pursue a celibate life. Following the death of her father, she married a gentleman of Faenza, Ugoletto Caccianemici, and had several children, all of whom died at a young age. Her husband became seriously ill and Rosanna persuaded him to enter with her into a celibate life as a religious; they both joined the double monastery of St Perpetua, he as a lay brother and she as a choir nun taking the name Umilitá. Rosanna’s convincing her husband to follow a life of chastity, and their subsequent clothing as a monk and nun, are depicted in poignant scenes within Pietro Lorenzetti’s polyptych of the life of Beata Umilitá (Plates 1.15. and 1.16.), completed around 1340 and held in the collection of the Uffizi Gallery.

Perhaps the most pertinent example of a wife guiding her husband towards spiritual purity and virginity is found in the marriage of St Elzear of Sabran and his wife, Blessed Delphina. When she was around twelve years old Delphina, who strongly desired to remain a virgin at all costs, was betrothed to Elzear. At first, Delphina withheld her consent, only agreeing to the marriage when she experienced a vision of the Virgin Mary who assured her that her virginity would be protected. Delphina and Elzear were married two years later, in 1300, and Elzear, although apparently initially hesitant, chose to follow her in her commitment. Together they vowed to live a virginal marriage and committed to lives of prayer, austerity, and charity, which included an imposition of chastity on the entire household, although the couple themselves did not make formal public vows of chastity until 1316. Elzear was canonised in 1369 and is the only layman to have been made a saint during the fourteenth century, while Delphina’s cause for canonisation, opened three years after her death, was not successful. Interestingly, Vauchez writes that Elzear is presented by his biographers as a “new Joseph.” Perhaps Elzear channels Joseph in his initial hesitation to maintain a virginal marriage with his wife, a

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139 Delphina’s hagiographer stresses that her intention to remain a virgin was simply that, an intention, rather than a formal act or vow. Ferdinand Holböck, Married Saints and Blesseds: Through the Centuries, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2002): 237; Elliott, Spiritual Marriage, 1998: 220.
141 Holböck, Married Saints and Blesseds: Through the Centuries, 2002: 237.
144 Vauchez, Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages, 2005: 383, fn. 503.
hesitation which is eventually allayed and replaced by a dedication to virginity and acts of charity. Even though Elzear’s cult was more successful than that of his wife, it is Delphina’s practice of virginity which has drawn greater discussion, perhaps further emphasising the general assumption that virginal marriages exist at the wife’s instigation.\textsuperscript{145}

This deepening interest in virginal marriages encouraged a deeper focus on Mary and Joseph’s perpetual virginity. The beginning of the fifteenth century saw growing interest in the virginal marriage of Mary and Joseph, particularly as a result of the efforts of Jean Gerson, the chancellor of the University of Paris and representative of the University and of the King of France at the Council of Constance, which had been established to resolve the problem of false popes.\textsuperscript{146} Of Gerson’s presentation to the Council, Andrew Doze writes that it was essentially “an excuse used basically to speak about Joseph for whom he had a great love, a deep veneration.”\textsuperscript{147} On August 17, 1413, Gerson issued a letter addressed to “all churches” in which he pleaded his case for a “day in honour of the same Virgin and of her husband the just Joseph, her witness and guardian”.\textsuperscript{148} On September 8, 1416, the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin, he spoke at the Council, arguing for the installation of a universal feast honouring Joseph, whom he claimed had possessed a holiness “concomitant with that of Mary” and had, like her, been assumed into heaven.\textsuperscript{149} Additionally, and very strikingly, Gerson purports that Christ was born of Mary “with the true or interpretative consent” of St Joseph, a just man who “wished that the will of God should be accomplished in all things.”\textsuperscript{150}

Further, Gerson questioned the typical artistic depiction of Joseph as an old man, stating that such a practice was used to make his chastity more credible; however, Gerson himself was of the view that Joseph was a young man, and argued this alternative artistic and conceptual vision

\textsuperscript{145} Cullum, “‘Give Me Chastity’”, 2014: 239.
\textsuperscript{146} The Council sought to formally depose or accept the resignation of three claimants to the papacy, the antipopes Benedict XIII and John XXIII, and the Roman claimant Gregory XII. When Gerson delivered his sermon in 1416, only Benedict XIII remained as pope. Progress towards a unified papacy was slow, as a single, new pope (Martin V) could only be elected once all the false claimants had been removed. On the deposition of Benedict XIII on the 26th July, 1417, Gerson rejoiced: “One legitimate man [Joseph] remains. Let him be made the betrothed and shepherd to the Church and let the whole world obey him.” Wilson, \textit{St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art}, 2001: 6; Carol M. Richardson, “St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs”, \textit{Renaissance Studies}, 26 (2), 2012: 262.
\textsuperscript{148} Wilson, \textit{St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art}, 2001: 6. Gerson also stressed that Joseph and Mary had shared everything as a married couple, except intercourse.
\textsuperscript{150} Filas, \textit{Joseph, the man closest to Jesus}, 1962: 221.
of the saint.\textsuperscript{151} It is perhaps a result of such arguments that depictions of a youthful Joseph began to grow in number. By presenting Joseph as, like Mary, both young and virginal, Gerson works to make Joseph’s virginity all the more laudable and to communicate particular qualities of restraint and self-control. These traits are closely aligned with “clerical” or “spiritual” masculinity, a term which was used to denote a form of manliness centred on self-mastery. The example of saints such as Hugh of Lincoln (d. 1200), who bravely and successfully battled to achieve chastity, offered a comforting model for men embarking on the monastic life and the reassurance that, by doing so, their masculinity was not being compromised.\textsuperscript{152} The monk was portrayed as still possessing his sexual virility, the indicator of his manhood, but in surpassing lust his masculinity is transformed and heightened.\textsuperscript{153}

Blancus’ depiction of the mutuality of Mary and Joseph also works to convey Gracián’s representation of them, along with Jesus, as a typology of the Holy Trinity. Gracián casts the Holy Family as the representatives of the Trinity on earth, indicating that each member of the Holy Family, through their particular attributes, parallels a Person of the Holy Trinity. Gracián identifies Mary as a parallel of God the Father, as she cooperates with Him in bearing His only Son, Jesus.\textsuperscript{154} Jesus, he continues, is the Divine Word, both man born of Mary and God begotten of the eternal Father, while Joseph reflects the Holy Spirit in that, like the Spirit, he is called to comfort, animate, accompany, and console Mary and Jesus.\textsuperscript{155}

In his comparison of Joseph and the Holy Spirit, Gracián gives reference to Isidoro Isolano, whose \textit{Summa de Donis Sancti Ioseph} (Summa of the Gifts of St Joseph, 1522) is recognised as “the first scholastically argued Josephine theological text”.\textsuperscript{156} Gracián writes:

\emph{Dice un’auttore, che, se sossero insieme tutti gli uomini del mondo da Adamo, che su il primo, infino all’ultimo, che nascerà nel tempo di Antichristo, e che lo Spirito Santo, il quale è di Sapienza infinita, e investigator de’cuori, avesse di loro ad}

\textsuperscript{151} McGuire, \textit{Jean Gerson}, 2005: 262.
\textsuperscript{154} Gracián, \textit{Sommario}, 1597: 2.
\textsuperscript{155} Gracián, \textit{Sommario}, 1597: 2.
[One author [Isidoro Isolano] states that if all the men from Adam, the first man, until the last man, who will be born in the time of the Antichrist, were gathered together in one place, and if the Holy Spirit, who is infinite Wisdom and who scrutinises hearts, would choose from among them all, He would choose none but Joseph to be the spouse of His spouse, the mother of the Divine Word and the daughter of the eternal Father.]\(^{157}\)

This quotation of Isolano is distinctly referenced in Morale’s epigram, which describes Mary as “born of the Father”, “bearing the Son”, and “Spouse of the nourishing Spirit”.\(^{158}\) While these words reflect the previous discussion of Joseph as the only possible spouse for Mary, they also point to a parallel between the saint and the Spirit in that Joseph is selected by the Holy Spirit, “who is infinite Wisdom and who scrutinises hearts”, to be “the spouse of His spouse.”

Blancus communicates the presence of the Trinity in his engraving, and in an incredibly striking way. As has been explicated, the two arms descending from the heavens and enfolding Mary and Joseph in their embrace clearly indicate God’s presence and participation in the nuptial union. Viewed in relation to the Trinity, however, these two arms can be individually interpreted as visualising God the Father and Christ the Son, with the dove of the Holy Spirit shared between them. This interpretation presents the implied figure as three separate persons or fragments, yet connected as a single, unified whole. Such a visualisation is not far removed from earlier artworks which, under the theme of the “Throne of Grace”, link the Trinity to the Crucifixion, or involve the Father and Spirit in the deposition of Christ from the cross.\(^{159}\)

Images such as an Austrian altarpiece of the Trinity with Christ Crucified, dating from 1410 and held in the collection of the National Gallery in Britain (Plate 1.17.), or Domenica Beccafumi’s 1513 triptych of the Trinity, held at Siena’s Pinacoteca Nazionale (Plate 1.18), show the seated Father supporting the arm of the Cross, bearing the body of Christ, while the dove of the Spirit appears between them.\(^{160}\) Bœspflug writes that Jean Malouel’s Pitié-de-Notre-Seigneur (Plate 1.19.), completed around 1400 and held in the Louvre, presents God the


Father taking the place of Joseph of Arimathea.\textsuperscript{161} Assisted by angels, the Father supports the body of the Son, perhaps even presenting the dead Christ to the sorrowful Virgin and John the Evangelist. Between the heads of the Father and the Son, the dove of the Spirit hovers, making this a Trinitarian piece. Each of these artworks, particularly through their positioning of the figures, conveys the Trinity as three individual and distinct persons which, together, compose a single, indivisible whole. Blancus echoes this artistic style in his own pertinent and distinct portrayal of the two arms and the dove conveying the Trinity.

The placement of the dove directly above Joseph’s head is of particular significance here. This positioning may first call to mind the apocryphal accounts of the Marriage of the Virgin, and previous artistic representations such as Giotto’s, in which the manifestation of the dove above Joseph operates as a sign of his divine selection. Additionally, the depiction of the dove in this way emphasises Gracián’s description of the cooperation of Joseph and the Spirit, who are both espoused to Mary, in the Divine Mystery. This cooperation is also expressed in the epigram’s description of Mary as “also the spouse of the nourishing Spirit”. This communion, Gracián writes, was fostered during the raising of Mary in the temple from the age of three until eleven, during which time she practiced “the highest prayer, contemplation, virtues, and work for the worship of God, enjoying the extraordinary consolation of the Holy Spirit, visions, revelations, and conversation with the angels, who brought her heavenly food for her sustenance.”\textsuperscript{162} Joseph is identified here as being called to offer to Mary consolation and nourishment as her spouse, and therefore is presented in the \textit{Summary} as a typological representation of the Spirit.

If the image is read in this way it, in conjunction with the parallels Gracián draws between the Holy Family and the Holy Trinity, can be classified as an iconographic type of the “Earthly Trinity”.\textsuperscript{163} According to this typology the Holy Family, with its three persons of Mary, the devoted mother and handmaid of the Lord, Joseph, her humble and self-denying husband, and Jesus, the holy and perfect son obeying his earthly parents and the Heavenly Father, is distinctly cast as a reflection of God the Father, Son, and Spirit.\textsuperscript{164} Jean Gerson references this typology


\textsuperscript{162} Gracián, \textit{Somnario}, 1597: 4.

\textsuperscript{163} The type of the “Earthly Trinity” is also referenced in Blancus’ engraving of Joseph, the just man.

in his poetry where he writes: “Oh, venerable trinity Jesus, Joseph and Mary, which divinity has joined, the concord of love!”

Interestingly, here Gerson names Joseph before Mary, and in the view of Herlihy Gerson’s use of the words “concord of love” references the “cultural and emotional ideal to which medieval families were invited to aspire.”

By establishing such distinct parallels between the Holy Family and the Holy Trinity, Gracián’s text, Blancus’ engravings and Morale’s epigrams collaborate in order to present to the viewer a specific characterisation of Mary and Joseph. Book I of the Summary, in its combination of text, image and epigram, emphasises the dignity of Mary and Joseph, their close relationship to God, their cooperation with divine providence, and their role in the fulfilment of eternal destiny as conveyed in Scripture.

In his conclusion to Book I, Gracián indicates to the brethren five doctrines through which they may be “espoused to grace”: first, to perform a full and true confession of sins; second, to receive the Sacraments frequently; third, to conduct a brief daily examination of conscience before sleep; fourth, to perform three acts of contrition each day, one before sleeping, one when rising or going to Mass, and one at midday; and fifth, which Gracián advises as obligatory for the Confraternity, to be particularly devoted to the Virgin Mary, the spouse of the brethren’s patron and father, Joseph. The provision of such doctrine not only offers to the reader clear practical instruction for practicing religious devotion in their daily life, but also, by describing them as being “espoused to grace”, offers them a connection with Joseph, “Spouse of the Virgin.” This actively fulfils the commission bestowed upon Gracián to achieve, through his writing, the goodness of souls and the promotion of Joseph’s honour. Gracián offers for the brethren, and indeed for his wider audience, practical instruction as to how they can cultivate grace in their daily lives and, by doing so, attain closeness to God and ultimately benefit the soul. By describing Joseph as “Spouse of the Virgin”, who is herself honoured in this doctrine and conveyed almost as a personification of grace, Gracián bestows upon the saint a distinct honour and dignity.

The treatment of St Joseph and his marriage to Mary within Book I of the Summary is a reflection not only of the established Scriptural, literary and artistic tradition, but also of the contemporary changes and challenges particularly relevant to marriage. Gracián presents

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Joseph as a young man whose willing acceptance of God’s will for his life calls to mind Old Testament figures, particularly Joseph of Egypt. The saint is also cast as the only suitable spouse for Mary and, by virtue of their mutual and consensual union, as sharing in Mary’s virginity. As has been seen, this portrayal reflects changing attitudes to the plausibility of their virginal marriage, which are rooted in sixteenth-century depictions of a youthful Joseph. Gracián also indicates that by Joseph’s marriage to Mary, whom the epigram titles “the spouse of the nourishing Spirit”, a typological connection is also established between the saint and the Holy Spirit. The visual representation of these ideas in Blancus’ engraving and their communication with the accompanying epigram emphasises an emblematic function. By accepting traditional norms, Blancus situates his image in a beloved narrative. The differences in his work, primarily the semi-anthropomorphic God the Father, the youthful Joseph, and the lack of observers or witnesses in the scene, reflect contemporary concerns, particularly those regarding sacramental marriage as a private affair which has God and mutual consent at its heart.
Gracián continues his *Summary* with an exploration of Joseph’s role as father of Jesus. While Scripture refers to Joseph in this way, for many centuries his paternal authority was downplayed, challenged, and rejected in apocryphal, theological and devotional literature. One of the first historical references to Joseph’s fatherhood comes from the second century, during which the Samarian philosopher Justin Martyr wrote in his *Dialogue with Trypho* that Jesus “was considered the son of Joseph the carpenter, and having no comeliness, as the Scriptures affirmed, he was thought to be a carpenter, (for, when he was on earth he used to work as a carpenter, making ploughs and yokes...).”  

The subject of Joseph’s fatherly authority was also explored in detail in the writings of the Church Fathers and by subsequent Doctors of the Church and theologians. This chapter will explore the ways in which Book II of the *Summary*, and particularly Blancus’ accompanying engraving (Plate 2), reflects and conveys the essence of Joseph’s fatherhood. It will do so through a consideration of the above genres, through reference to the established artistic tradition of the Holy Family at work, and in an exploration of Book II’s cultural ties to ideals of sixteenth-century fatherhood. Joseph is ultimately presented as a role model for men. His masculinity is embodied in his exercising of his fatherly role. The depiction of his fatherhood in Blancus’ engraving would have presented the *Summary*’s original audience with an image of maleness and fatherhood that was, recognisable, desirable, and imitable.

In contrast with his engraving of the Marriage of the Virgin, in the engraving preceding Book II Blancus places Jesus, Mary and Joseph within an identifiable setting: Joseph’s workshop. The Holy Family toils within an enclosed space. In the centre is Joseph’s workbench, and the floor is littered with sawdust. Joseph’s tools hang from the wall. Large wooden planks lean against the wall, carrying the viewer’s eye down to Joseph and Jesus through their strong diagonals. The linearity of the doorframe further draws focus to the figures, while the diagonals of the ceiling beams carry the eye to the borders of the image field.

Blancus embodies in his figure of Joseph the parallel roles of father and carpenter, shown by the depiction of him working closely with Jesus as his carpenter’s bench to measure a wooden

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plank. The bearded Joseph wears a tunic and worker’s apron, and leans over his workbench. He holds the measuring string in his hands. Joseph’s direct gaze and the strong line of his arm draw focused attention to his work. The curly-haired child Jesus, who is barefoot and wearing a short tunic with the sleeves upturned, looks towards Mary, while in his hands he holds the end of the thread which Joseph pulls taut across the plank. Seated on the right of the work, Mary focuses completely on her needlework. She is once again presented as a young, modest woman, dressed in long garments and her head veiled. The distinct line in her garments draws the viewer’s eye down her body to the sewing basket placed near her feet. In her right hand she holds a needle and thread. The placement of her raised hand aids in directing the viewer to the centre of the image field and to the figure of Joseph. Beneath the image is the epigram: Terrarum caelique faber pater unus Iesus est. Ecce pater Christi nunc faber alter adest (“The Artisan of land and sky is the one Father of Jesus. Behold, the father of Christ, another artisan is here present.”).

The subject of Joseph’s fatherhood has typically been approached with caution. In her work, Creating the Cult of St Joseph, Charlene Villaseñor Black writes that no Church Father produced a text explicitly devoted to Joseph. Instead, they focused on refuting heresy, instructing the faithful, and establishing Trinitarian and Christological doctrine particularly concerning the Divinity of Christ, the Incarnation, Christ’s dual nature and will, and the maternity of the Virgin Mary. Indeed, the Church Fathers tended to proceed cautiously when they spoke of Joseph as husband, and even more so when they spoke of him as father; Francis J. Filas asserts that “on the subject of the Holy Family, difficulties arose for them in every direction.”

It seems almost inevitable, therefore, that Joseph had to remain in the background as he was perceived to be presenting a clear challenge to the doctrines the Church Fathers were seeking to establish:

1. As divine, Jesus is the second Person of the Holy Trinity, sharing the same divinity with the Father, but also the Father’s Son.

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2. As man, He shares our humanity.
3. As Son of God, He has a Father but no mother.
4. As Son of Man, He has a mother but no father.\(^5\)

It is apparent that Joseph does not fit within this outline. While it was required of him to protect and support Mary and her Child during the years leading to Jesus’ commencement of his public ministry, after this time Joseph began to fall into the background. If special importance had been bestowed upon Joseph, Jesus would have experienced a far greater difficulty in fulfilling his mission and especially in drawing disciples who believed in his Divine Sonship.\(^6\) Thus, the common approach, particularly by early Fathers of the Church, was to present Joseph’s fatherhood as relevant only insofar as it affirmed and supported these doctrines.

Book II of the *Summary* not only examines the fatherhood of Joseph in its own right, but also draws distinct parallels between the fatherhood of Joseph and the Fatherhood of God. Gracián explores these connections with reference to Scripture, which describes Joseph using two names proper to God Himself. He writes:

*Benedetto sia Iddio Padre del nostro Signore Gesù Christo, dice l’Apostolo, da cui deriva il nome del Padre nel Cielo, e nella terra. Che, avendo due nomi, il primo di Padre di Gesù, il secondo di Fabro, o artista, il quale creò il mondo...trovò un Fabro, artista, o legnaiuolo, chiamato Giosèf, i cui colacasse questo nome di Padre Gesù.*

[Blessed be God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, says the Apostle, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name [Ephesians 3:14]. Since he has two names, the first being Father of Jesus, and the second the Craftsman or Artisan who constructed and created the universe, [God]...found a craftsman, an artisan or carpenter, named Joseph, upon whom he bestowed the name father of Jesus.]\(^7\)

These connections are further emphasised in the image and epigram. Joseph is presented in Book II as the carpenter or artisan chosen by God, the Divine Artisan, to take Jesus as his son. In doing so, he is shown to successfully fulfil the role bestowed upon him as Jesus’ father.

The above passage, in conjunction with Blancus’ image and Morone’s epigram, stresses that as the Creator of the universe, and through His first and greatest work of the Incarnation, God the Father was the first Craftsman. Joseph, as a carpenter, not only acts as a reflection of God

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but also plays a crucial role in continuing His work of creation and redemption.\(^8\) It is thus symbolically significant that God chose another craftsman, a carpenter, as the custodian and protector of Mary and Jesus.

Further, the representation of carpentry as a divinely ordained profession would certainly have appealed to the carpenters or woodworkers who formed the Archconfraternity. This is expanded upon by Gracián, who in Book II writes,

\[\ldots felici potete chiamarui voi altri fratelli legnaiuoli, poi che avete due si buoni compagni nel Vostro officio, come sono Gesù e Giosef, se li saprete imitare, essergli grati, e servili. Felice officio, e eccellentissima arte, della quale non ritroviamo atro inventore, che l’istesso Iddio, e tra quelli, i quali l’hanno essercitata troviamo esser stati Giosef e Gesù.\]

[I call you blessed, brother carpenters, because Joseph and Jesus are members of your guild if you know how to imitate, please, and serve them. A blessed trade and most excellent art, the inventor of which is none other than God Himself, and among the practitioners of which are Joseph and Jesus!]\(^9\)

Gracián uses his discussion of Joseph’s fatherhood to offer at the close of Book II direct doctrinal instruction to the brethren of the Archconfraternity. This instruction is, he writes, designed to guide them in how to make their hearts a “dwelling place for the love of God.”\(^10\) He offers them five brief steps in achieving this goal: defending the love and law of God; rendering the soul more pure; adorning their work with an exercise of virtue; unifying their lives with that of Christ; and finally, the offering of obligations.\(^11\) These instructions to the brethren connect them closely with Joseph, who puts them all into practice. In obedience to God’s command he takes Jesus into his home as his son, works to provide for his family, and unites his life with that of Jesus.

What is significant regarding this instruction is Gracián’s strategic use of terminology pertaining to carpentry. For example, in his first instruction, he encourages the brethren to take “the threads of knowledge above the table of your conscience, and above the wood of your heart, to pull straight the threads of good suggestions”, and also refers here to the “compass of

\(^8\) Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 117.
\(^10\) Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 119.
\(^11\) Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 119-122
consideration”, and the “T-square of conformity”.\textsuperscript{12} Such imagery would have made Gracián’s instruction more meaningful for his audience of carpenters, and once again serves to bestow upon the profession a sublime dignity and a means by which members could strengthen their conscience and relationship with God. It further reflects the intrinsically linked roles of Father and Artisan which are found in God and which are, by virtue of his role as Jesus’ father, paralleled in Joseph.

Gracián identifies ten offices fulfilled by Joseph that enable him, even though he was not a participant in the Incarnation, to be titled “father of Jesus”.\textsuperscript{13} In identifying the offices fulfilled in Joseph’s fatherhood, Gracián emphasises that Joseph is a true father in that he educated Jesus, bestowed upon the child his name, chose Jesus as his son and heir before he was born, exercised authority over his household and responsibility for protecting and nurturing the Virgin and Child, loved Jesus intimately, and was chosen as father by Jesus.\textsuperscript{14} Significantly, each of these offices is communicated through an emblematic cooperation of text, engraving and epigram. Using these offices as its focus, this chapter will assert that Joseph’s fatherhood was identified as a model for contemporary fathers and heads of households. God the Father bestows on Joseph the role of father of Jesus which operates inseparably with God’s fatherhood, in that it functions as a type of the Divine Fatherhood which it emulates. Joseph can be read not only as a typology of God the Father, but also, through his role as a carpenter, as a typology of \textit{Deus Faber}, God the Divine Artisan and creator of the world.

These offices are: tutor, spiritual father, governor, adoptive father, foster father, father by election, patron of Mary, husband of Mary, and father of good works. The offices were understood by Gracián to contain the essence of fatherhood. In this way, they imply something of what it meant to be male and a father in sixteenth-century Italy, the context of Gracián and his original audience. Douglas Blow writes:

> Maleness was conventionally associated with such things as war, dominance, politics, reason, order, form, testicular fertility, heat, stability, and constraint, whereas femininity, conversely, was associated with such things as love,

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{...meni in filo da tingere del conoscimento sopra la tavola della sua conscienc, e sopra il legno del suo cuore, per tirare dritti il fili de buoni propositi, e con il compasso della considerazione, con il cartabono della giustitia, e la squadra della conformitá.} Gracián, \textit{Sommario}, 1597: 120.
\textsuperscript{13} These offices are taken from Gracián, \textit{Sommario}, 1597: 77-83.
\textsuperscript{14} Chorpenning, \textit{Just Man}, 1993: 129-134.
submissiveness, domesticity, emotions, excess, matter, vaginal receptivity, cold, instability, and intemperance.¹⁵

In a world not only male-dominated but also male-centred, visual expression of these qualities not only communicated male identities, but also shaped, defined, and redefined them, ultimately giving men a variety of ways of responding to the social expectation that a man should behave as a man.¹⁶ As will be seen, many of the fatherly offices fulfilled by Joseph readily conform to these masculine conventions, thus communicating Joseph’s fulfilment of society’s gender expectations.

**Joseph the tutor**

The first office identified by Gracián is that of tutor. Joseph occupies the role of tutor of Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace, Son of the Monarch of the Universe, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.¹⁷ Gracián draws an analogy between the relationship between Joseph and Jesus and that of a tutor with a great prince:

_E si, come, quando si manda suore della città sua un gran principe a studiare a qualche università, se gli da un pedagogo, acció che lo governi e accompagni, a cui il principe ubbidisce, come a padre, e egli lo commanda, e governa come figliuolo benche quel commandare sia servire. Così, venendo Christo nell’università di questo mondo ad, imparare l’ubbedienza nella catedra della sua passione, come dice San Paolo, gli danno per pedagogo Giosef._

[When a great prince is sent abroad to study, he has a tutor to guide and accompany him. The prince obeys the tutor as if he were his father; the tutor commands and guides the prince as if he were his own son, and this governance is a form of service. Likewise, Christ came to the university of this world to learn obedience in the classroom of His Passion, as St Paul says (Hebrews 5:8), and Joseph was given to Jesus as his tutor.]¹⁸

In his writing, Gracián emphasises particular qualities pertaining to the tutor, especially the ability to guide, command and accompany “the prince” with authority, in the manner of a father and as a service to him.¹⁹ In return, the prince gives to the tutor the obedience of a son, even though the tutor is not his father.²⁰ Gracián indicates that Joseph, in being titled Jesus’ father, held the authority to guide and instruct the child. Gracián places particular importance upon

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¹⁶ Blow, _On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy_, 2015: 8.

¹⁷ Chorpenning, _Just Man_, 1993: 129.


¹⁹ Gracian cites as his sources St Andrew of Jerusalem, St Augustine and St Rupert. See _Sommario_, 1597: 57.

²⁰ Gracián, _Sommario_, 1597: 57.
the subject of obedience, indicating that this is what Jesus is instructed in by Joseph. What this passage also indicates is that Joseph is commissioned by God (“given”) to be the tutor of Jesus. God’s bestowing of this role upon Joseph casts it as divinely ordained, thus creating a parallel between God the Father and Joseph.

Reading Gracián’s words in conjunction with Blancus’ engraving, a visual reference to Joseph’s role as tutor of Jesus can be identified in his hieratic placement within the scene, and in the visual connection between father and son.

Gracián’s consideration of Joseph as a learned man was likely inspired in part by the work of Isidoro Isolano. Isidoro dedicates part 3, chapter 12 of his Summa to a discussion of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.21 Isidoro writes that Joseph’s wisdom is aligned with that of the Virgin, in accordance with the words found in the book of Proverbs: “Wisdom is with the humble” (11:2); as Joseph’s humility conforms with that of his humble spouse, they both possess wisdom.22 Isidoro attributes to Joseph the gift of learning: he is knowledgeable in theology and philosophy, and his intellect corresponds naturally with his role as protector.23

In his depiction of Joseph educating Jesus, Blancus visualises the growing contemporary emphasis placed on Joseph’s intellect and the priority given to the education of men during the medieval and Renaissance periods. Education was a priority in the forming of men. Children, particularly those who were destined to become knights and clerics, were raised in a man’s world in which education and instruction were means by which they could gain approval.24 Although it was still important for men to deny or reject the feminine within themselves, this was not the primary goal of education. Rather, education and instruction, especially in the liberal arts, was focused upon giving a man the skills to compete verbally against and dispute with other educated men and to ultimately prove his superiority over those who were not educated.25 Only men could belong to universities, and most students of the earliest institutions

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23 In part 2, chapter 4 of the Summa, Isidoro writes that Joseph’s acute intellect is necessary in protecting Christ from the devil. See Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: 43; 227 n218.
were clergy; later, sons of aristocratic families or men who were academically minded and granted a scholarship began to attend. 26

The cultural values a man would gain from a “liberal education” were ascribed the term “humanism”, from the Latin humanitas, by classical philosophers such as Cicero. 27 Since the nineteenth century, the term has been used to refer to a philosophical stance seeking to glorify human nature, present the value of the human person, and exalt the goals of this world, such as critical thinking, over otherworldly values, particularly religious ideology and superstitions, which were considered “medieval”. 28 These goals were seen as particularly attainable through the “rediscovery and discovery” of the classical literatures of ancient Greece and Rome and the assimilation of humane values that could be derived from them. 29 Humanists, the vast majority of whom were men, were typically employed in the legal, medical and religious fields. 30 Their deepening consideration and pursuit of the value of the human person operated in conjunction with a growth of interest in the humanity of Christ and the imitability of this humanity by the laity. 31 This was significantly aided by the devotio moderna, a movement which flourished in the Netherlands in the fourteenth century. 32 The efforts of mendicant orders, particularly the Franciscans, also offered for the laity a tangible image of interaction between God and man, with Saint Francis of Assisi frequently referencing the importance of imitatio Christi and imago

26 Karras, From Boys to Men, 2003: 70, 71.
30 Blow, On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy, 2015: 93.
32 The devotio moderna stressed that the laity could practice piety just as successfully as monastics and promoted asceticism, contemplation and meditation. From this movement sprung the most popular book of the fifteenth century, Thomas á Kempis’ The Imitation of Christ, which defines this “imitation” as meditation on Jesus’ life and suffering. By the end of the fifteenth century, such an imitation was viewed as necessary for those aspiring to sanctity. Christa Grössinger, Picturing Women in Late Medieval and Renaissance Art (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997): 21; Thomas á Kempis, The Imitation of Christ, trans. Aloysius Croft and Harold Bolton (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc.): 1; Patricia Ranft, How the Doctrine of the Incarnation Shaped Western Culture (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013): 223.
Dei (the imitation of Christ and the image of God). Additionally, the developing interest in creating imitable forms of lay sanctity, as seen with the beata Maria Sturion of Venice (c. 1379 - 1399), offered for the laity another means by which they could imitate the humanity of Christ.

These social and religious developments effected a transformation in the perception of male status and of relationship between fathers and sons. While Renaissance men and fathers, particularly those belonging to the warrior class, were often portrayed as distant and demanding figures, with greater emphasis on education and intellectual pursuits came a new recognition of status being less determined by military prowess and more so by a man’s ability to connect with and nurture others, especially wives and children. Through the influence of patricians such as Palla Strozzi, Niccolò Niccoli and Roberto Rossi, classical learning, which had generally meant little to upper-class men preoccupied with maintaining family businesses and patrimony, became “an essential ingredient of gentility.” Virtue was no longer only demonstrated through military might, but could also be communicated through academic excellence. Operating alongside this was the expectation placed on fathers to take an active role in the upbringing of their children, a responsibility which previously belonged exclusively to mothers.

Blancus’ illustration of Joseph working with and instructing the child Jesus in carpentry, yet also placed in the centre of the scene, can be seen to communicate the importance of education, particularly of sons by their fathers. Additionally, it is a clear visualisation of the description

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33 St Francis was described by Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure “virtually as the second Christ” and thus worthy of imitation. Numerous paintings produced in the decades following Francis’ death include him adoring the Christ Child at the Nativity, bearing the stigmata, preaching to the birds, and working among the poor and the sick. Particularly significant are the frescoes of Giotto, which effectively communicate a connection with the human and divine: in the depiction of the stigmatisation (Plate 2.1.), Francis’ kneeling posture and open hands communicate a human openness which is paralleled with the appearance of the seraph, from whom he receives the stigmata. Franciscan spirituality was thus particularly useful in encouraging a religiosity closer to the sphere of human existence to grow out of the Middle Ages. Ranft, *How the Doctrine of the Incarnation Shaped Western Culture*, 2013: 223; Colafranceschi, “‘a Te, o beato Giuseppe’”, 2012: 194.

34 After Maria’s husband left her in the care of his father to go to war, she began to attend the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo where she received instruction and spiritual direction from Thomas of Siena. Thomas clothed her in the habit of a Dominican penitent, but she died a month later from the plague. In his legend of Maria’s life, Thomas presents her as a rather ordinary woman who practiced measured mortification and simple modesty and was not privy to mystical ecstasies or visions. She thus becomes an imitable version of the inimitable saints. Maiju Lehmijoki-Gardner, *Dominican Penitent Women* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005): 105-108; Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, 2005: 212; Campbell, *Medieval Saints’ Lives*, 2008: 97.


given in Matthew’s Gospel of Joseph as *tektōn* (13:55). This is a somewhat ambiguous word which refers to “a worker in wood, a carpenter, joiner, builder: any craftsman or workman”; it could incorporate work with materials including stone, iron, and metal, but not wax or clay. The particular identification of Joseph as a carpenter perhaps gained momentum through the description of Justin Martyr, which is described by John P. Meier as:

an inference…rather than a relic of oral tradition, it does tell us what work a person from Palestine – which Justin was – would attribute to a *tektōn*….Thus while Jesus was in one sense a common Palestinian workman, he plied a trade that involved, for the ancient world, a fair level of technical skill.

The ambiguity surrounding the term *tektōn* and of its Latin equivalent, *faber*, to which has been afforded the “unusual interpretation” as meaning “smith”, presents the possibility that Joseph would not have primarily been a woodworker but rather one who worked with iron.

The depiction of the centrally-placed Joseph instructing Jesus in his trade demonstrate Joseph’s ability and authority to educate Jesus, and also highlight the obedience Jesus holds to Joseph as his father and teacher. Joseph is not a distant or disengaged figure, but is shown to be closely interacting with Mary and Jesus, thus emphasising his fatherhood and presenting him to the spectator as a model father. Additionally, Joseph’s hieratic figure, and his placement at the apex of the compositional pyramid with Mary and Jesus occupying the two corners, emphasises his primary role within the family.

Blancus’ central and hieratic placement of Joseph finds parallels in the visual cult of the Holy Family. An example is found in Martin Shongauer’s diminutive *Holy Family* (Plate 2.2.), which dates from the 1470s and is held in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The painting shows Mary seated within an unembellished interior and feeding grapes to Jesus while Joseph enters the scene in the left, carrying a bundle of wheat and with the ox and ass behind him. It is notable for the details it includes which, according to the Flemish style of

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concealed symbolism, contribute to the overall context and meaning of the piece. The Holy Family is placed in the centre of an ordinary setting, surrounded by objects of daily life, and occupied with responsibilities and tasks relevant for the work’s original audience.

It is important to note that Joseph is shown in Shongauer’s work as the provider for the family, a characterisation which Blancus ostensibly adopts in his depiction of Joseph standing above Mary and Jesus. Joseph’s placement at the apex of the compositional pyramid, with Mary and Jesus occupying the two corners, emphasises his authoritative role as instructor, tutor and provider for the family, and is communicative of the particular masculine ideals of domination, politics, order and stability. This placement also evokes a reference to the Trinity which once more aligns Joseph with the divine.

The triangular compositional structure has been most notably executed by Leonardo da Vinci. Between 1475 and 1478, while Leonardo was working in the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, the two collaborated in a depiction of the Baptism of Christ (Plate 2.3), held in the Uffizi Gallery. Between 1483 and 1486, Leonardo completed his first painting of the Virgin of the Rocks (Plate 2.4), which is held in the Louvre. In both paintings, the triangular composition is employed as a reorganising principle to effect stability. Additionally, when used in Christian art the triangle traditionally evokes a symbolic reference to the Trinity, suggesting three equal parts joining together to form a whole. In Cornelis Cort’s engraving of The Trinity in Glory (Plate 2.5), completed in 1566 and held in the collection of the British Museum, the placement of the members of the Trinity creates a pyramidal structure with the Father and Son occupying the sides and the Spirit forming the apex. Cort’s engraving replicates Titian’s painting of the Trinity in glory, completed between 1553 and 1554 and held in Madrid’s Museo del Prado (Plate 2.6). Blancus’ work, through its triangular composition, thus evokes strong

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41 The grapes can be interpreted as a symbolic reference to the “true vine”. In addition, they reference the wine shared in the Eucharist as the Blood of Christ. A Eucharistic reference is further employed in the inclusion of the wheat. While representative of the host, the Body of Christ, the wheat can also be seen an attribute of Bethlehem, “House of Bread”. Charles Minott has also drawn attention to the canteen of water contained in the niche behind the Virgin, which he claims alludes to the Marian epithets contained within the Song of Solomon (“fountain of the gardens”, “well of living waters”, and the “sealed fountain”). See James Snyder, Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350-1575 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1985): 232.


themes of harmony, intimacy and mutual relationship, with each member of the family occupying their own roles and responsibilities. The situation of Joseph at the compositional apex, combined with the placement of the Holy Family in a domestic setting, perhaps indicates Joseph’s primary role in effecting this harmony and stability within the family, firmly establishing him as the head of the family unit in accordance with contemporary norms.

The Summary’s representation of Joseph as the tutor who is able to instruct Jesus and to receive obedience and respect from him openly challenges the way in which he is portrayed in apocryphal narratives. In such texts, Joseph is frequently shown as unauthoritative, complaining, and ridiculous alongside the glorious Virgin. The second-century Infancy Gospel of Thomas, which focuses on fantastical childhood miracles and punishments enacted by Christ, such as his striking a boy dead for knocking against him, and then later resurrecting him, presents Joseph as definitively incompetent, even in his own trade:

His [Jesus’] father was a carpenter and made at that time ploughs and yokes. And he received an order from a rich man to make a bed for him. But when one beam was shorter than its corresponding one and they did not know what to do, the child Jesus said to his father Joseph, “Lay down the two pieces of wood and make them even from the middle to one end.” And Joseph did as the child told him. And Jesus stood at the other end and took hold of the shorter piece of wood, and stretching it made it equal to the other. And his father Joseph saw it and was amazed, and he embraced the child and kissed him, saying, “Happy am I that God has given me this child.”

Although Joseph is named as the father of Jesus, he is not presented as an especially strong fatherly figure in this apocryphal work. When he makes one wooden beam shorter than the other and does not know what to do, he takes instructions from the Child Jesus. Joseph is thus completely reliant on the miraculous deeds of the child, rather than on his own skills or aptitude, to perform his tasks and responsibilities effectively.

The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour (c. 7th century), which is compiled from a number of sources, including variations on the Matthean and Lukan gospels, the

Protoevangelium of James, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and various fantastical tales, indicates that Joseph, “who was not very skilful in carpentry”, never needed to make anything on his own as it is the child Jesus who is shown to provide for the family. God, the Divine Artisan, is thus shown to be more proficient that Joseph, the earthly artisan. It is through the efforts of the child Jesus that Joseph corrects mistakes and performs his work accurately. Jesus is presented here as possessing wisdom, knowledge and authority, while in contrast Joseph becomes a comical figure who is easily ridiculed and who, in some instances, stands as a mere plot device. In this instance, it is in fact Jesus who becomes the tutor of Joseph.

In contrast to these apocryphal tales, Book II, through its text de facto and through the engraving and epigram, present Joseph as a capable worker with the ability to instruct Jesus in his trade. Blancus’ depiction of Joseph as a carpenter, busy in his workshop and surrounded by the tools of his trade, operates in accordance with Gracián’s description: “I prefer the opinion of St Ambrose, who says that Joseph was expert in iron work and also in the carpenter’s trade as well as in other mechanical arts because he was exceedingly ingenious and industrious.” Gracián emphasises, however, that Joseph practiced and offered the services of a carpenter, an office more suited to sustaining the lives of a family living in poverty.

Joseph’s characterisation in the apocrypha as being instructed by Jesus heavily influenced his presentation in medieval drama. As Filas writes, while early German miracle plays presented Joseph as dignified and respectable, English drama was particularly noted for its denigrating depictions of him as a senile figure who was too old even to stand straight, let alone command the strength and ability to instruct Jesus. The Ludus Coventriae (c. 1450-1500), for example, in notable for its cautious treatment of Joseph. While Joseph laments, “I am old and also cold, walkyng doth me wo”, and is apprehensive that “An old man may nevyr thryff/With a ʒonge


51 Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour, 38. As cited by Filas, Joseph, the man closest to Jesus, 1962: 35.


53 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 110.

54 Filas, Joseph, the man closest to Jesus, 1962: 523. This view has been challenged in more recent scholarship, which has encouraged the view of Joseph’s positive representation in medieval drama. See, for example, Mary Dzon’s argument that while the elderly Joseph is often portrayed as performing “undignified” domestic tasks, including cooking or sewing, such a representation may in fact be designed to show his genuine love and care for Jesus.
wyff”, he obediently and reverently takes Mary as his wife.55 Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century German plays saw a strong development in Joseph’s character. He was droll, honest, rough, and almost always the target of comic elements and humour which often illuminated a “strong, often coarse, realism”.56

These representations contradict the stereotypical views of maleness offered by Douglas Blow. Depictions of Joseph as bent and senile, and as the butt of jokes, contrast with the expectations placed on men and fathers to dominate, to rule over women and their households and, in contrast to women, to be stoic, reserved, and stable.57 The Summary challenges this prevailing characterisation. In emphasising Joseph’s capability to offer instruction and guidance to Jesus, particularly through the hieratic and central placement he is given in Blancus’ engraving, the Summary presents him as the head of his household. He is able to successfully occupy dominance and authority over Mary and Jesus while at the same time encourage and promote stability and harmony within the family unit.

The authority of Joseph to guide and teach Jesus and Mary would have been of distinct relevance to its Roman audience. Not only was the pursuit of knowledge and education a priority, but Christian thought focused significantly on hierarchy. God’s establishment in Genesis of the nuclear family of Adam and Eve emphasised the husband’s natural authority over his wife and children.58 The father’s authority was responsible for securing the social order maintained by elites and was also the means of interaction between the family and the state.59 This authority was not without struggle, however. Humanist treatises reflected the tensions which existed between fathers and sons, often as a result of the heavy influence imposed on the father-son relationship by patriarchal ideology. For example, Bartolomeo Scala’s Ducedane sit uxor sapienti (Whether the Wise Man Should Marry, 1457 – c.1459) laments that “Though we [men, fathers] hope for solace in old age, most often we inspire hatred, and they [sons] rejoice at our death more than they console us alive.”60 The struggle for power and authority

56 Filas, Joseph, the man closest to Jesus, 1962: 524.
57 Blow, On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy, 2015: 8.
60 Manes, Motherhood and Patriarchal Masculinities, 2011: 92.
within the family unit, in conjunction with the value placed on age, education and experience, led to competition between fathers and sons.61

Joseph’s tutelage of Jesus, as presented in the Summary, is offered to the brethren of the Archconfraternity as an imitable model of interaction with their children. Joseph is shown to possess the authority to instruct and teach Jesus, and also to successfully command respect and obedience from the child. The Summary’s text also establishes Joseph’s role as tutor as paralleled with the fatherhood of God, particularly in that Joseph is described as chosen by God to instruct His Son Jesus. The engraving, through its triangular composition, communicates Joseph’s typological role and conveys the harmony and stability existing within the Holy Family, with Joseph offering instruction to Mary and Jesus who, in return, express obedience to his word.

**Joseph’s role as spiritual father**

Gracián also identifies Joseph’s fulfilment of the role of spiritual father. This role, according to Gracián, finds its basis in Scripture, and particularly in Joseph’s naming of the Child Jesus according to the command of the angel in Matthew’s gospel (1:21). Joseph, therefore, is shown to be given fatherly authority over Jesus by God the Father. God, in turn, confers upon Joseph the title “father of Christ”, which is referenced by Morale in his epigram.

Scripture indicates that Joseph was publicly assumed to be the natural father of Jesus. Luke the Evangelist readily describes Joseph as the father of Jesus and has Mary title him in this way, and in the Matthean account of Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth, his hometown, the people fail to believe his message and instead challenge him, saying, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (Matt 13:55).62 In John’s gospel, the belief that Joseph is Jesus’ natural father fuels the people’s rejection of Jesus.

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, 61

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61 Manes, *Motherhood and Patriarchal Masculinities*, 2011: 91. Manes notes that adolescence in particular was viewed as a dangerous stage, a time of “identity crisis, uncontrollable sexual desires, and changeability”. She continues in saying that it often leads to the disenfranchisement of young men, who as a result were driven to compete with their fathers for the responsibilities and privileges of office.

62 This subject is adopted by Gracián who indicates, with specific references to the accounts of the Presentation and of the Annunciation to Joseph, that Joseph was not only given this title by those who did not know the mystery of the Incarnation, but also by those who did know. Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 68-69.
whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, “I have come down from heaven?” (John 6:42).

This passage demonstrates that in the fatherly authority he exercises over Jesus, Joseph bestows on Jesus his identity, as Jesus is primarily identified through his relationship to Joseph. The theme of Joseph’s spiritual fatherhood of Jesus is also raised in patristic writings. In his Summary, Gracián’s presentation of Joseph’s fatherhood as both true and valid, albeit not generative, is an open challenge to Origen. In his Homilies on Luke, Origen writes that in order to make the Davidic ancestry of Joseph meaningful, Joseph is titled “the father of the Lord”, yet this fatherhood is only mentioned in order to coincide with the fact that Joseph is listed as a legal ancestor of Christ. Thus, the fatherhood of Joseph is simply a means of justifying something else and is not legitimate. Gracián’s Summary explicitly contradicts this. While Gracián attributes to Joseph the title of “father of Jesus”, he stresses this to be a true fatherhood which operates not only in cooperation with God’s own paternity of Jesus, but also with Joseph’s virginity.

Blancus’ visualisation of Joseph’s authority as spiritual father is perhaps a reflection of developments in the artistic tradition of the later Middle Ages. Representations of holy figures began to be regarded as a means of exploring and expounding gender roles and conventions, and depictions of Joseph were more strongly influenced by the “divergent and constantly changing ways in which masculine identities were constructed throughout the Middle Ages.”

The visual representation of gender roles and conventions was arguably of greatest importance in works which depicted God the Father, whom artists sought to cast as powerful, masculine, and the claimant to the rights of paternal authority over Christ and the enforcement of familial discipline.

A strong example of this is found in Dosso and Battista Dossi’s The Nativity with Annunciation to the Shepherds (Plate 2.7), which was completed between 1534 and 1536 for the votive chapel of Alfonso I d’Este in Modena Cathedral, and is now held in Modena’s Galleria Estense.
this work, clear similarities are identified between God the Father and Joseph.\footnote{Wilson, \textit{St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art}, 2001: 45-47. Wilson is the first source to discuss this as a St Joseph altarpiece and to compare the physical similarities between Joseph and God the Father.} Joseph, who kneels before the infant Christ, is white-haired, bearded, and dressed in traveller’s clothes, his hands open in a gesture of wonder and adoration. Joseph’s representation in this way is an effective mirroring of the gestures and physical features of God the Father who, like Joseph is white-haired and bearded, dressed in brown-coloured garments, and extending His hands over the scene. The inclusion of God the Father in this scene draws attention to His paternity of Christ, but in establishing physical similarity between God and Joseph the artist highlights that God has bestowed upon Joseph paternal authority over Jesus, and that Joseph willingly accepts this authority. This theme is visibly expressed in the Summary through the epigram’s identification that God the Creator, the true Father of Christ, bestowed upon His Son a father on earth, a protector, who is Joseph the artisan.

While Joseph the artisan is rightfully the father of Jesus, and while his rights are bestowed upon him by none other than God the Father, the Divine Artisan, he can never be seen to overshadow the Divine Father. While this engraving depicts Joseph as clearly occupying the roles of father and head of the family unit, the epigram reinforces that God the Creator is the one Father of Christ, and has given authority pertaining to Him to Joseph. The epigram thus encourages Joseph to be read as “the shadow of the Father”, providing Mary and Jesus with love, protection and support, involved closely in the education of Jesus and the teaching of a trade, and acting as the means by which the Divine plan of Redemption can come to fruition.\footnote{This description of Joseph as “shadow of the Father” originated in the writing of François-Louis d’Argentan (\textit{Conférences Theo-logique et Spirituelles sur le Grandeurs de la tres-Vierge Marie, Mere de Dieu} (1680). D’Argentan describes St Joseph as representing God the Father to God the Son. See Leonardo Boff, \textit{Saint Joseph: The Father of Jesus in a Fatherless Society} (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009): 104.}

**Joseph the governor**

Book II also presents Joseph as governor, in that he has Mary and Jesus under his command and acts as God’s faithful counsellor on earth. Gracián casts Joseph as the head of God’s house, God’s family, of Jesus and Mary.\footnote{Chorpenning, \textit{Just Man}, 1993: 130.} The hieratic placement of Joseph within the image field is a visual communication of this role, while the epigram’s identification of Joseph as “artisan”, and its paralleling with God the Father, “the Artisan of land and sky”, portrays Joseph as God’s representative. This office communicates the particular masculine ideals of domination,
restraint and order. Joseph successfully commands Jesus and Mary, but at the same time is faithful to the guidance and power of God.

Joseph’s role as governor finds its basis in the Scriptural account of the Flight into Egypt. On being commanded by God to take Mary and Jesus into Egypt, Joseph rises and does so without any question from him or from Mary. In apocryphal literature, however, Joseph’s governance of Mary and Jesus is challenged. In the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus’ unruly behaviour brings the Jewish adults to threaten various forms of punishment upon the family, and their particular targeting of Joseph more than Mary perhaps indicates that they see it as his role to inflict parental discipline.\(^{70}\)

And the parents of the dead child [the child Jesus had struck down for hitting him] came to Joseph and blamed him and said, “Since you have such a child, you cannot dwell with us in the village; teach him to bless and not to curse. For he is killing our children.”\(^{71}\)

Although Joseph is beseeched to discipline Jesus, such a task seems impossible for him. The *Infancy Gospel* continues by stating that after the parents of the dead child approach and accuse him, “Joseph called the child to him privately and admonished him saying, ‘Why do you do such things? These people suffer and hate us and persecute us.’”\(^{72}\) After the people who had accused Jesus suddenly become blind, Joseph “arose and took him by the ear and pulled it violently.”\(^{73}\) This response shows that Joseph is clearly fearful of the threats made against him, seemingly because they threaten his own preservation and reputation, as well as the reputation of his family. It also once more demonstrates Joseph’s fatherly ineptitude, as he only scolds Jesus after he has himself been criticised.

Visual representations of the Holy Family tended to subdue Joseph’s governance over Mary and Jesus. While the *devotio moderna* encouraged deeper interest in the daily life of the Holy Family and in their role as a model and inspiration for the contemporary family unit, Joseph’s frequent depiction as passively observing the scene from the fringes of the image field undermined his authority. In Joos van Cleve’s *Holy Family* (Plate 2.8), which was painted between 1512 and 1513 and is held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the focus of the work is the centralised large, lavishly-dressed, pure-skinned *Madonna lactans*\(^{74}\) who holds the infant

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\(^{74}\) An iconography of the Virgin Mary breastfeeding the infant Jesus.
Christ on her lap. She is placed behind a parapet laden with masterfully detailed wine and fruits, which works to separate her and the Christ Child from the viewer. Her flowing mantle protectively enfolds her shoulders and the Child on her lap, and thus in a way separates them both from the smaller, elderly, noticeably rough Joseph, dressed in a hooded tunic and holding a small scroll of parchment and a pair of reading glasses. Interestingly, the legible text on the scroll begins with Elizabeth’s words of greeting to Mary as recorded in the Scriptural account of the Visitation, and then continues with Mary’s response, the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55). Wilson writes that Joos van Cleve’s bespectacled and reading Joseph calls to mind a scholar standing at a lectern, and once more communicates the emphasis given, particularly by Isidoro, to his status as a learned and erudite man. Joseph is, however, distinguished from Mary and Jesus by his diminutive size and rough appearance; while his proximity to Mother and Child and his inclusion within the same visual space unites them as a familial unit, the disparity in physical appearance leads Joseph to again be portrayed as somewhat of a secondary figure.

In contrast with this work, Blancus’ Joseph is hieratic and centralised. This detail conveys qualities of power and authority which further emphasise his fulfilment of the office of governor. Morale’s description of Joseph as the “artisan” who is paralleled against the “Artisan of land and sky” communicates Joseph’s role as God’s faithful earthly representative who is given the right to govern Mary and Jesus as husband and father. The parallel of Joseph the artisan with the Divine Artisan imbues the saint with authority and also shows that Joseph’s fatherhood of Jesus operates in harmony with the design, guidance and power of God.

This parallel offered through Morale’s epigram communicates the primary message of Blancus’ engraving. The epigram encourages a more complete reading of the image than simply a glorification of carpentry, a visualisation of rich familial love or of the importance of co-operation and of carrying on tradition or the family line, or an intimate scene corresponding to the Holy Family or Holy House of Nazareth artistic genre. The parallel Morale draws between Joseph and God the Father finds its basis in Scriptural and patristic writings. Scripture’s reference to Jesus as “fabri filius”, the labourer’s son, prompted many early Church Fathers and medieval writers to stress that Joseph’s role as “faber” paralleled him with Deus.

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77 Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 44.
faber, the Eternal Creator. One such promoter of Joseph’s position as a typology of God the Creator was St Ambrose of Milan, who in his *Commentary on Luke* writes:

> It does not seem out of place to explain why [Jesus] had an artisan for a father. By this figure in effect, he showed that he had the Artisan of all things for a father, he who created the earth, and thus it was written, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

In his description of Joseph as a worker, Ambrose successfully connects the human and divine artisans. Joseph is not rendered ineffective, nor is he overshadowed by God; rather, he communicates and co-operates with God, his role as “earthly artisan” itself a glorifying figure of the divine Artisanship of the Creator. It is through this relationship that Joseph obtains his role as governor of the Holy Family.

**Joseph as guardian**

The fourth office of fatherhood listed by Gracián is that of guardian. Joseph is presented as the guardian of Mary and of Jesus, supporting the Child until he reached maturity. His authority to guard and protect Jesus and Mary shows again that he possesses the masculine ideals of domination and order. Joseph’s hieratic placement in the engraved scene, and his active engagement in his work, both visualise this role.

While Joseph’s centralised and hieratic placement within this scene has already been viewed as communicative of his roles as tutor and governor, it also expresses his guardianship. His placement above Jesus and Mary emphasises the protection he offers them as their guardian and head of the family unit.

Joseph’s fulfilment of the office of guardian is given reference in the writing of the Franciscan Observant leader, St Bernardine of Siena (d. 1444), who produced his own sermon detailing his beliefs and strong, tender devotion to Joseph. Joseph, he claimed, was not only called and reputed to be the father of Christ, “but it is also necessary to believe that the holy man publicly

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conducted himself toward him in word, act, bearing, care, and authority as a true father towards his son, and Christ as a son towards his father. Otherwise it would have become openly known to their neighbours and the world that he was not his son.”

Bernardine thus saw Joseph, the wise and conscientious head of his family, as a model for real fathers, and his role as protector of the Holy Family was exceptionally relevant at a time when family life was under threat from a range of elements including plague, invasion and war.

Additionally, Bernardine criticised artists for demeaning Joseph who, he argues, was “the most cheerful old man in the world… [yet] the foolish artists paint him as a sad old man with his hand on his cheek as if he were in pain or depressed.”

Significantly, an increasing number of artists working throughout the Renaissance and into the Early Modern period did not subscribe to this representation, and Blancus’ engraving is but one example of the growing number of depictions which sought to present the Holy Family as a true model of familial relationships and Joseph as the guardian of Mary and Jesus.

The Early Modern period in particular saw the Holy Family move from lavish, idealised settings into domestic interiors. There, Mary was often found busy sewing, while Jesus, as a young apprentice, usually worked on the construction of a cross or assisted Joseph who more often than not was occupied in making useful objects.

The shift in representation of Joseph from a sleepy elderly man to a physically powerful labourer works to make his guardianship of Jesus and Mary more paramount and conceivable for the spectator. In a fifteenth-century Spanish Book of Hours held in the British Library collection (Plate 2.9), the Holy Family is placed within a small and intimate domestic interior.

In the background, Joseph is shown using a hand plane, with a saw, an axe, and other tools of his trade hanging on the wall behind him. The hieratic, pure-skinned, long-haired and lavishly-dressed Mary is seated in the foreground. She holds her embroidery work on her lap and a needle in her hand, with her

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86 Richardson, “St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs”, 2012: 244. It is here noted that representations of Joseph sleeping, while certainly not outwardly conveying action or authority, may in fact conform to the iconographic genre of the dream of St Joseph. The subject of Joseph’s dream is discussed in more detail in the fifth chapter.
sewing basket placed beside her. Standing to her right is the Child Jesus, shown holding the thread Mary is using to sew. This scene of ordinary family life, placed within a book which was used in daily devotion and prayer, would arguably have offered to the faithful a representation of the Holy Family which was both tangible and relatable, qualities which we also find in Blancus’ composition.

A similar approach is found in Jan Soens’ *The Holy Family* (Plate 2.10.), painted around 1580 and held in the Santuario di Santa Maria della Steccata in Parma.\(^9\) Set before a straw-roofed structure, perhaps a stable, the Holy Family is shown busy with work. The pure-skinned Mary, seated by the left of the image, looks up from her sewing in a gaze of contemplation. In the centre of the image, the boy Jesus gazes up to Joseph, taking his hand as though to direct him towards Mary to whom Jesus’ other hand is pointing. Joseph, who is long-haired and grey-bearded yet physically powerful, stands beside his workbench and looks down at the Christ Child. Soens “domesticates” the Holy Family, showing them occupied with everyday tasks and interacting with one another through gesture and gaze. The inclusion of numerous *putti*, which assist the Virgin in her work, descend from the heavens bearing grapes, or observe the scene from above, maintains an idealised element.

The harmony and intimacy of these figures, placed close together and within a small compositional space, is replicated by Blancus in his engraving. The placement of the Holy Family within Joseph’s workshop presents Joseph as a worker, thus communicating qualities of productiveness and capability to provide for his family. Additionally, the wooden planks leaning against the wall communicate a foreshadowing of Christ’s crucifixion. This symbolic allusion is, however, not overt, and so Blancus’ image is less concerned with conveying allegorical references to Christ’s death and more centred on communicating a consideration of the Holy Family’s everyday life and of Joseph’s role as guardian of Jesus.\(^9\)

Joseph’s guardianship of the Holy Family is also approached in the *Summary* as closely connected with his role as guardian of the Church. While, as previously mentioned, the depiction of the Holy Family working together and their organisation within a triangular composition indicates their role as the origin of the Church, Joseph’s hieratic placement and

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productiveness bestows upon him a significant function.\textsuperscript{91} His position at the apex conveys him as the builder, patron and guardian of the Holy Family and, by extension, of the Church.

**Joseph’s adoptive and foster fatherhood**

Joseph is also shown to fulfil the offices of adoptive and foster father, in that he willingly receives a child he has not generated, elects him as his son, and takes him into his home. Gracián emphasises the depth of Joseph’s fatherhood in the words:

\textit{Si come accade, che un uomo o onorato, quando si vede senza figliuoli, pone gli occhi in povero figliuolo orfano, bello, e di buoni costu, e lì fa scrittura di lasciarlo herede di tutto il suo, e però favoriscono le li figliuoli addotivi. Poiche erano li beni di fortuna, I quali possedeva Giosef,}

\[\text{When an honourable man without sons of his own sees some poor, orphaned, handsome, and well-disposed child, he makes provision to leave him his estate and thus the law favours adopted sons. Joseph had a meagre estate to leave to his adopted son Jesus; however, with the love with which he loved Him, he truly did more than what St Augustine said one time when he was inflamed with love: “Lord, if I were God and You were Augustine, I would give You the being of God and I would remain with that of Augustine.”}\textsuperscript{92}

The epigram’s titling of Joseph as “father of Christ”, and the description of him as “here present”, directly refer to these offices.

In describing Joseph in such a way, Gracián presents a distinct challenge to the writing of St Epiphanius (d. 404), which Filas states has “regrettably been a deterrent to the growth of genuine knowledge of St Joseph and a correct appraisal of his fatherhood”, as “no other Father of the Church has given such trusting alliance to the legends of the Apocrypha.”\textsuperscript{93} Epiphanius explicitly denies Joseph’s fatherhood in his \textit{Panarion}, saying: “Joseph was in the rank of father…but he was not a father….For how could one who did not have relations be his father? This is impossible.”\textsuperscript{94}

Gracián’s description of Joseph’s adoptive and foster fatherhood is more closely aligned with the writing of St John Chrysostom (d. 407). Chrysostom indicates that Joseph’s selection by God to closely co-operate in the work of redemption includes him intimately in the Incarnation.

\textsuperscript{91} The Holy Family, in this light, is cast as the origin of the Church.
\textsuperscript{93} Filas, \textit{Joseph and Jesus}, 1952: 32.
\textsuperscript{94} Lienhard, “St Joseph in Early Christianity”, 2011: 33.
He ascribes these clear, almost defensive and prescriptive words to the angel appearing in Joseph’s dream:

Mary will bring forth a son, and you will call His name Jesus. For you must not think that because He is of the Holy Spirit you are thereby excluded from co-operating in this plan. Even though you contributed nothing to His generation and the Virgin remained inviolate, nevertheless, what belongs to a father without destroying the dignity of virginity, that I bestow on you, that you name the Child. “You indeed will name Him.” Even though He is not your physical offspring, nonetheless you will act as a father towards Him. Therefore, from the time of the imposition of His name, I straightaway place you in close relationship to the Child.95

Although in this passage Chrysostom presents fatherhood as intrinsically connected with generation, he writes that the angel still attributes to Joseph all that belongs to a father “without destroying the dignity of virginity”; importantly, while Mary’s virginity is safeguarded the subject of Joseph's virginity is never mentioned.96 The angel clearly states that Joseph’s fatherly authority and “close relationship” with Jesus begins “from the time of the imposition of His name”, thus indicating the significance and validity of an adoptive and foster fatherhood.97

Joseph’s fulfilment of these offices is also addressed in Augustine’s description of true fatherhood being fulfilled in the love between a father and son rather than in the act of generation.98 He indicates that Joseph’s paternal love and will to act as the father of Christ takes the place of any bond of physical generation.

Whoso then says that he ought not to be called father, because he did not beget his Son in the usual way, looks rather to the satisfaction of passion in the procreation of children, and not the natural feeling of affection…Consider, brethren, the laws of adoption; how a man comes to be the son of another, of whom he was not born, so that the choice of the person who adopts him has more right in him than the nature of him who begets him has. Not only then must Joseph be a father, but in a most excellent manner a father.99

97 Filas notes (*Joseph and Jesus*, 1952: 32) that this validity, in Chrysostom’s view, does not extend to the marriage between Joseph and Mary. He writes that Chrysostom argues Joseph was still alive at the time of the Crucifixion, stating that the fact Christ bestows Mary into the care of the beloved disciple is proof that no previous marriage bond existed.
Augustine thus emphasises that it is Joseph’s choice to accept Jesus as his son which makes him a father “in a most excellent way”. Joseph’s paternal love and his willingness to act as Jesus’ father replaces the bond that arises from physical generation.\footnote{Filas, \textit{The Man Nearest to Christ}, 1944: 191.} Thus, he occupies a true fatherhood of Jesus which does not violate the natural fatherhood belonging to the Eternal Father.\footnote{Filas, \textit{The Man Nearest to Christ}, 1944: 196.}

Writings of Church Fathers and theologians thus had a clear impact on the representation of Joseph’s adoptive and foster fatherhood. Further significant and influential, particularly for Blancus, were artistic depictions of the Holy Family, particularly those conforming to the iconographic type of the Holy House of Nazareth, which tend to portray the Holy Family at work or performing everyday tasks within a domestic setting. Such representations were aided particularly by the publication of the fourteenth-century devotional \textit{Meditationes Vitae Christi} (Meditations on the Life of Christ), which is attributed to an anonymous Christian writer now identified as Franciscan friar Jacobus de Sancto Gemigniano.\footnote{The \textit{Meditations} were long assumed to be the work of St Bonaventure. Recent scholarship has concluded that it was definitely the work of a Franciscan, and alleges the author to be one Jacobus de Sancto Gemigniano. He was active in Tuscany at the beginning of the fourteenth century and served as the leader of the 1312 rebellion of the Tuscan spirituals, who sought a stricter reform to the Franciscan tradition. See particularly David J. Falls, \textit{Nicholas Love’s Mirror and Late Medieval Devotional Culture: theological politics and devotional practice in fifteenth-century England} (London: Routledge, 2016): 39-42; David Falvay and Peter Tóth, “New Light on the Date and Authorship of the \textit{Meditationes Vitae Christi}”, in \textit{Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe: Diverse Imaginations of Christ’s Life}, ed. Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015): 61; 88-89.}

Based on apocryphal sources, the more subjective, emotionally-charged stories included in this text helped to strengthen Joseph’s role in the Gospels and also paved the way for iconographic innovation.\footnote{The \textit{Meditations} were long assumed to be the work of St Bonaventure. Recent scholarship has concluded that it was definitely the work of a Franciscan, and alleges the author to be one Jacobus de Sancto Gemigniano. He was active in Tuscany at the beginning of the fourteenth century and served as the leader of the 1312 rebellion of the Tuscan spirituals, who sought a stricter reform to the Franciscan tradition. See particularly David J. Falls, \textit{Nicholas Love’s Mirror and Late Medieval Devotional Culture: theological politics and devotional practice in fifteenth-century England} (London: Routledge, 2016): 39-42; David Falvay and Peter Tóth, “New Light on the Date and Authorship of the \textit{Meditationes Vitae Christi}”, in \textit{Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe: Diverse Imaginations of Christ’s Life}, ed. Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015): 61; 88-89.}

In the account of the Nativity, the author writes that after Mary had given birth, Joseph stood, took some hay from the manger and placed it at her feet, and then turned away; then, after Mary had wrapped the Infant, she “knelt to adore him and to render thanks to God…Joseph adored him likewise.”\footnote{Joseph is an old man in the \textit{Meditations}, but his old age is not for comic relief; instead, it evokes virtues of compassion, wisdom and moderation. See Black, \textit{Creating the Cult of St Joseph}, 2006: 24-5; Muller, \textit{Representations of Elderly People}: 50.}

In this scene, Joseph is not a disinterested observer, but shows his care for Mary and Jesus in placing some straw at Mary’s feet and then turning away, perhaps in a respectful gesture intended to offer privacy. Further, his kneeling together with Mary to adore the Christ Child illustrates his wonder and reverence at the Divine Mystery, and signifies his
cooperation in the work of Redemption.\textsuperscript{105} It is evident that this description was responsible for the most significant and drastic change in Christian artistic representations of the Nativity.\textsuperscript{106}

This representation of Joseph is echoed in Book II of the Summary through Gracián’s argument and the accompanying engraving and epigram. We have already seen that the hieratic placement of Joseph in this scene communicates his authority and guardianship, and his interaction with the child Jesus expresses his professional capability as well as his power and willingness to instruct his son in his trade. Particularly significant when considering the offices of adoptive and foster fatherhood and their application to Joseph is Morale’s epigram. Morale titles Joseph as the “father of Christ”, which is bestowed upon him by God the Father, “the one Father of Jesus.” Further, Morale’s description of Joseph as “here present” signifies his willingness to assume the role bestowed upon him by God. Although he did not generate Jesus, on the reassurance of the angel Joseph readily receives Jesus as his son. Morale’s epigram also demonstrates the validity of Joseph’s fatherhood through its description of Joseph the artisan being selected by the Divine Artisan, God the Father. Joseph’s fatherhood is therefore not presented as incomplete, invalid, or accidental, but as divinely ordained and exacted to its full potential.

\textbf{Joseph as father by election}

The seventh office fulfilled by Joseph is that of father by election. Gracián indicates that this is expressed clearly in the fact that Jesus the Son chooses Joseph for his father and bestows upon him the respect and reverence of a son, while at the same time Joseph exercises the command, superiority, and governance according to a father.\textsuperscript{107} This collaboration between Jesus and Joseph is perhaps most clearly expressed in the visual connection Blancus casts between them through the table and the thread, which they both hold.

\textsuperscript{105} We also find such a representation in the Revelations of St Brigid of Sweden. In her description of the Nativity, Brigid writes that the “proper old man” Joseph lit a candle and fixed it to the wall of the stable before leaving at the time of Mary’s delivery. With the birth of Jesus shone a light so great that it “passed the brightness of the sun, and the light of the candle that Joseph had set on the wall could not be seen.” On Joseph’s return, writes Brigid, he “fell down on his knees and worshiped him, and he wept for joy...And then she [Mary] rose up, and Joseph helped her to lay the child in the manger, and they both kneeled down and worshiped him.” She also states: “at the name of St Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mother, all the saints made a profound inclination to him, testifying by the serenity and sweetness of their looks that they rejoiced with him for his exalted dignity.” See Bridget of Sweden, \textit{St Bride and her book: Birgitta of Sweden’s Revelations}, trans. Julia Bolton Holloway (Newburyport: Focus Information Group, 1992): 120, and Filas, \textit{Joseph, the man closest to Jesus}, 1962: 514.

\textsuperscript{106} Boltger Foster, \textit{The Iconography of St Joseph}, 1978: 26. Boltger Foster notes that this change did not occur until around 1400.

\textsuperscript{107} Chorpenning, \textit{Just Man}, 1993: 132-133.
Joseph’s fatherhood by election finds its foundation in Luke’s account of the finding of Jesus in the temple. Luke’s statement that Jesus “went down with them” to Nazareth and “was obedient to them” (2:51; emphasis mine) indicates that Jesus willingly showed filial obedience to Mary and to Joseph, whom he respected as his father. The father-son relationship between Joseph and Jesus is therefore one of mutual consideration and affection. Luke concludes his infancy narrative with a brief summary of the slow passing of time in which Jesus “increased in wisdom and in years” (2:52). In doing so, the evangelist leaves it to be interpreted that this growth occurred under the watchful eye of Joseph who ensured, with enduring love, the wellbeing of his family. Gracián emphasises that no man but Joseph has the dignity of being called the Father of the Word, as Joseph called Jesus his son and Jesus called him his father in the world. In arguing for this dignity, Gracián calls to mind the account in the Gospel of Luke of Jesus’ anointing by a sinful woman (7:36-50), in which the woman, who kisses Jesus’ feet, washes them with her tears, and dries them with her hair, is pardoned by Jesus for her great love. Gracián stresses that Joseph, who never committed a mortal sin, had a pure love and numerous times touched, washed, and kissed the feet, hands, chest, head, and lips of Jesus, without him saying Noli me tangere, “Do not touch me” (John 20:17).

Gracián emphasises the great virtue and honour flowing from Joseph’s role as father of Jesus. He further argues:

_E, se onorimo, lodiamo, e chiamamo beati, e ponghiamo per intercessori, raccommandandoci con molto fervore san Francesco, e san Domenico, e tutti gli altri santi, solo perchè la Chiesa li ha canonizati per santi, chiamandoli, e dandoli nome di servi di Gesù Christo: con che affetto, e devozione, e fervore conviene che lodiamo, honoriamo, glorifichiamo, invochiamo, siamo devote, e ponghiamo per nostro intercessore il glorioso san Giosef, il quale l’istessa Chiesa, per bocca di gli Evangelisti, e dell’Angelo, e della Gloriosissima Vergine Maria ha canonizzato per tanto santo, lo chiamano Padre di Gesù?

And, if we [the faithful] honour, venerate, title as “blessed”, seek the intercession of and approach with great fervour saints Francis, Dominic, and all the other saints, only because the Church has canonised them saints, with what affection, devotion, and fervour should we venerate, honour, glorify, invoke, be devoted to, and ask for

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110 Scripture does not name this woman, and when she is identified in tradition it is either as Mary Magdalene or as Mary of Bethany.
intercession of the glorious St Joseph, whom this same Church, the mouths of the Evangelists, the angel, and the glorious Virgin Mary have called the father of Jesus? ¹¹²

Joseph’s fatherhood by election is presented in Augustine’s writings on the Scriptures. In his first Sermon on the New Testament, one-third of which is dedicated to a discussion of Joseph’s fatherhood, Augustine writes that Christ, the offspring of the union of Mary and Joseph, was subject not simply to Mary as his mother but also to Joseph as his father.

The fact of our Lord’s words, “I must be about my Father’s business”, does not mean that God is the Father in such a way that He denies Joseph to be the father.

How do we prove this? From Scripture, which reads thus: “...and when He went down with them, He came to Nazareth, and He was subject to them.”

“It did not say, “He was subject to His mother”, or “He was subject to her”, but “He was”, it says, “subject to them.” To whom was He subject? Was it not to His parents? Both were parents to whom He was subject with that condescension by which He was the Son of Man. ¹¹³

In these words is contained the essence of Joseph’s fulfilment of the office of father by election, in which Jesus actively chooses to submit to Joseph’s fatherly authority. In willingly submitting himself to the rule of his parents, Jesus, as Augustine states, practices the condescension befitting him as “Son of Man”. As Gracián indicates in his description of Joseph’s fulfilment of this office, while Jesus chooses Joseph as his father, Joseph also chooses to govern Jesus as his son.

This office of fatherhood is also elucidated in the work of Rupert of Deutz (d. c. 1180), a contemporary of Bernard of Clairvaux. He emphasises that Joseph’s fatherhood is both valid and complete, and that Jesus shows to Joseph the reverence of a son for his father.

Born as a little child in this world, namely, without a father in the flesh, the Lord made use of that blessed man as His father in every way; and in the genealogy which Matthew follows out, He rested on St Joseph as if on the top rung of a ladder, for every need of His humanity…That ladder prefigured them, on which the Lord rested, including the genealogy of Christ which the holy evangelist so composed that it would come to Christ through Joseph…to whom the final and greatest of promises was made. ¹¹⁴

¹¹² Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 73-4.
CHAPTER TWO

Through his analogy of the ladder, Rupert of Deutz gives significant attention to the subject of Jesus’ reliance on Joseph “for every need of His humanity”. While Joseph willingly assumes a fatherly authority over Jesus, Jesus in turn is presented as completely dependent on Joseph, whom he accepts as his “father in every way.” Through his words, Rupert of Deutz successfully conveys Joseph’s fulfilment of the office of fatherhood by election.

Representations of Joseph as a father who interacts tenderly with and receives affection from his son diverged from the established view of masculine authority, expressing an overwhelming affection between Joseph and Jesus rather than an adherence to familial tradition, discipline, or paternal hierarchy.115

The description of Joseph as an “elective father” is emblematically expressed primarily through Blancus’ illustration of each member of the Holy Family working with thread. It is important to note that the thread used by Mary, who is sewing, and by Joseph and Jesus, who measure a beam of wood, is not cut. Mary appears to be holding a large ball of thread, a pair of scissors clearly visible in the sewing basket at her feet, and the thread used by Jesus and Joseph is still attached to the spool which rests on the ground at Jesus’ feet.

Throughout literature and art, the Virgin has often been depicted as spinning or weaving with the thread of life, conveying her role in God’s plan of salvation made manifest in the Incarnation of Christ.116 The depiction of thread here, and particularly of thread that is uncut, can be seen to convey themes of salvation or redemption as it contrasts the symbol of a cut thread as a symbol of the end of life, and of spinning or weaving as activities which convey man’s course on earth.117 This theme is conveyed in Scripture, particularly in the words of Hezekiah, King of Judah, who states, “My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd’s tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom” (Isaiah 38:12). The prophet Jeremiah also states, “O you who dwell by many waters, rich in treasures, your end has come, the thread of your life is cut” (51:13). The symbolism evoked by cut thread is therefore well-established, and perhaps Blancus, in representing the scene in this way, is

commenting on the salvation and redemption brought in Jesus and concealed in the simple life
of the Holy Family.

The fact that Blancus depicts all three figures working with thread arguably represents their
cooperation in the salvation and redemption of the world. Looking particularly at the figure of
Joseph, perhaps Blancus’ depiction of his use of uncut thread can be interpreted as a visual
reference to the ancestral and legal rights transferred from Joseph to Jesus through his role as
father, and to Joseph’s role in preserving the Word and ensuring the effect of redemption
through Christ. Joseph’s collaboration with Jesus can be regarded as a sign of his willing
acceptance of Jesus as his son, and as reflective of his role as artisan, as stressed in the epigram,
and of the typological connections this role bears with the Divine Artisan, who is the Author
of life and of salvation (Acts 3:15) and whose work of redemption is continued in this humble
carpenter from Nazareth.

Joseph as patron of Mary

Joseph also successfully fulfils the fatherly office of patron, in that when he married Mary he
became her lord and she his property. In describing the nature of this office, Gracián draws an
analogy between Joseph and the master of a country estate:

_Secondo le leggi, quando l’uomo è signore e padrone d’un giardino, ò d’una
heredità, se à caso in quel giardino nascesse una nuova fonte, ò nell’heredità si
ritrovasse ascoso un tesoro, la fonte e il tesoro sono del padrone del giardino e
dell’ heredità. Quando sposarono Maria con Giosef, secondo il vigore, e volere
delle leggi del matrimonio, Giosef su fatto signore di Maria, e gliela diedero per
sua propria._

[According to the law, when a man is the owner and master of a garden or country
estate, if it happens that a new fountain springs up or on the estate a hidden treasure
is found, the fountain and treasure belong to the owner of the garden and estate.
When Joseph was espoused to Mary, he became, in accord with the laws of
marriage, her master and was given her as his own.]\(^\text{118}\)

In the case of the Holy Family, Gracián states, Jesus is the “garden fountain” and “the well of
living water, from whose side flows water that gushes up to provide eternal life”, while Mary
is the orchard or enclosed garden in which is discovered “a hidden treasure that to acquire a

\(^{118}\text{Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 133}\)
merchant would sell all that he had.”\(^{119}\) Thus, as patron of Mary Joseph can be called the master and father of Jesus, the “divine treasure and fountain” which belongs to him.\(^{120}\)

The Marriage scene discussed in the previous chapter expressed an equality between Mary and Joseph, and here Blancus seems to express a willing deference on Mary’s part. Her seated position below Joseph alludes to this, as does her modest expression and posture.

The characterisation of Joseph as Mary’s patron is strongly influenced by the medieval and Renaissance climate. Wives were urged to serve their husbands as children did, possessing no authority and subjecting themselves to the rule of the husband in a manner befitting the maxim that “the lesser serve the greater”.\(^{121}\) Just as children were the property of the father, so the wife became the property of her husband upon her union with him in marriage. The role of wives was clearly outlined in the work of the Venetian humanist Francesco Barbaro, *On Wifely Duties* (1416). One of the earliest Renaissance texts on marriage, Barbaro’s work is not so much a defence of marriage as it is guidelines for the selection of a wife and the maintenance of a household. He emphasises the importance of a wife maintaining love and respect for her husband, express modesty, and honour her husband through her dress, decorum, and words.\(^{122}\)

The principal duty of the wife is thus, perhaps, to communicate her husband’s authority, power and wealth through her appearance and actions, in this way confirming his patronage.

Joseph’s role as patron is featured in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard characterises Joseph as “a prudent and faithful servant…whom the Lord placed beside Mary to be her protector, the nourisher of His human body and the single most trusty assistant on earth in His great design.”\(^{123}\) Going beyond the concise Scriptural narratives, Bernard seeks to identify Joseph as a “brave, humble man with intense faith, strong convictions, and a deep


\(^{120}\) Questo divino tesoro e fonte sono di Giosef . Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 77.


\(^{123}\) Bernard’s writings on St Joseph are contained in four homilies “super Missus Est”, known as the *Homiliae de laudibus Virginis Mariae*, in his Sermon II for the Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord (n. 10), and in Sermon IV for the Nativity of the Lord (n. 2). ; Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 183, cols. 55-87, 99, 127. English translation taken from Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 3; 177, n. 6.
devotion to Mary.”

Bernard’s emphasis on Joseph’s protection of Mary, and on his role as assistant to God in the plan of redemption, corresponds with Gracián’s depiction of the saint as patron of Mary.

The depiction of Joseph as Mary’s patron is not an especially overt artistic subject but does feature in visual representations of the Holy Family. Lorenzo Lotto’s *Rest on the Flight into Egypt with St Justine* (Plate 2.11), which was painted during the 1530s and is held in the Hermitage Museum, places the Holy Family against the backdrop of a landscape. They are accompanied by the praying St Justina of Padua, a Christian martyr identified through her attribute of a sword piercing her breast. The elderly Joseph, who occupies the centre of the composition, presents Justina to the Christ Child who lies asleep underneath a small white sheet reminiscent of a shroud, while by the left edge of the composition Mary gazes across from her book. Joseph’s central placement and his gesture of unveiling the sleeping Child to Justina and, by extension, to the viewer, works to convey his role as patron of the Holy Family and, according to Wilson, emphasises his urgency to share with Justina his role as “witness to the faith”. An additional example can be seen in Paolo Veronese’s 1551 depiction of the Holy Family accompanied by Saints Anthony Abbot, Catherine, and the infant John the Baptist (Plate 2.12), which is held in San Francesco della Vigna in Venice. The artist presents Mary and the infant Christ seated upon a pillar at the apex of the composition and looking down at the saints standing beneath them. Joseph, who is again centralised, sits at Mary’s feet and rests his head against his hand. Veronese here establishes Joseph as an intermediary. While his centralised placement and position at Mary’s feet communicates fidelity and guardianship, he is also presented as the channel through which the adoring saints can communicate with Mary and Jesus. Additionally, his direct outward gaze acts as a means by which the viewer can engage with and even enter the work, once again conveying his role as patron.

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125 Art Through the Ages, Masterpieces of Painting from Titian to Picasso (Las Vegas: Guggenheim Hermitage Museum, 2002): 121. This work bears close compositional similarity with another of Lotto’s paintings, *Madonna and Child with Sts Joseph and Catherine*, which was completed in 1533 and is held in the collection of the Pinacoteca dell’Accademia Carrara in Bergamo. For this artwork, see Carolyn C. Wilson, “Lorenzo Lotto and the Pictorial Crafting of St Joseph as a Figure of Cult”, Lorenzo Lotto e le Marche: “Per una Geografia dell’Anima. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi” (Florence: Giunti, 2007): 138.
126 Art Through the Ages, 2002: 122.
Blancus’ depiction of a seated Mary communicates themes of submission and deference, yet her placement in the foreground of the work makes her easily accessible for the viewer. Blancus does, however, use compositional elements to draw the viewer’s gaze from Joseph to Mary, thus communicating his role as her patron. The angle of Joseph’s body and the line of his left arm direct the viewer’s focus to Mary, so encouraging the spectator to be drawn to Mary through Joseph. This particular quality works strongly to emphasise that Joseph effectively fulfils the role of patron of Mary which he assumed upon his union with her in marriage.

**Joseph, the husband of Mary**

Gracián indicates the eighth role fulfilled by Joseph as husband of Mary. This role, he writes, in itself bestows upon Joseph the right of being titled Jesus’ father. Gracián draws a parallel between the role of Joseph and the role of a stepfather, writing:

> Il marito della madre d’un figliuolo si chiama padre, se bene non lo genera, e questa è cosa si certa, che ordinariamente si vede, che le mogli giovani, che restano vedove con figliuoli a’petti, maritandosi la seconda volta, il padregono e lo chiam figliuolo, e il putto lo tratta come suo padre se lo consideriamo bene, più ragione hà da essere chiamato Giosèf padre di Gesù, che non qual figliuolia padregono.

[The husband of the mother of a child is called father, although he did not beget him. This is so certain that ordinarily when young women with children at the breast become widows and marry a second time, the stepfather raises his wife’s child as the child’s father and calls him son, and the son treats him as its father. If we consider this, there is greater reason to call Joseph father of Jesus than to attribute the name father to any other stepfather.]

Gracián continues with his description of Jesus being born and raised under the protection of Joseph, who was Mary’s true husband. This representation is communicated in the engraving by the placement of Jesus beneath Joseph, indicating his upbringing under Joseph’s protection, and by the visual relationship between Mary and Jesus.

In his *Summary*, Gracián represents Joseph’s fatherhood as indicating rather than creating a paternal relationship. In this way, he reflects the writing of Ephrem, who stresses that some underlying reason must exist to validate Joseph as a father and as “father of Jesus” even though

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Joseph had no participation in the conception. 133 According to Ephrem, Joseph’s role as father is the result of his marriage to Mary and of his protection of the Mother and Child. 134 Therefore, it is through his role as Mary’s husband that Joseph can rightfully be called the father of Jesus. This argument corresponds with Gracián’s statement that Joseph’s fulfilment of the office of “husband of Mary” enables him to be titled “father of Jesus”. Although Ephrem gives significant attention to the marriage of Mary and Joseph as a prerequisite for Joseph’s fatherhood of Jesus, in Hymn 6 of his Hymns on the Nativity he attributes the following words to the Virgin which contrast with Gracián’s emphasis on the couple’s mutual union. Ephrem casts the marriage of Mary and Joseph more as a union of convenience rather than of mutual consent; Mary’s admission that “I tremble to dare to address You as son of Joseph, for You are not his seed” communicates a veritable sense of repulsion which operates at odds both with Scriptural narrative and with the text of the Summary. 135

“My mouth knows not how to address You, O Son of the Living One. I tremble
to dare to address You as son of Joseph, for You are not his seed. Yet I shrink
from denying the name of him to whom I have been betrothed.” 136

Joseph’s exercise of the office of “husband of Mary”, from which he can be titled as Jesus’ father, is aligned with the writing of Augustine, as quoted by Aquinas in his Summa Theologica. In these words, Augustine emphasises that Mary’s titling as the wife of Joseph is not meaningless; rather, their close unity of heart brings them together. Additionally, Augustine indicates that it is by Joseph’s privilege and dignity as Mary’s husband that the genealogy of Jesus is traced through Joseph’s line and not Mary’s. Therefore, through Joseph’s role as Mary’s husband, and through his successful fulfilment of this role, he is titled as Jesus’ father.

Since the same evangelist affirms that Joseph was Mary’s husband and that Christ’s mother was a virgin, and that Christ was of the seed of Abraham, what must we believe, but that Mary was not a stranger to the family of David: and that it is not without reason that she was called the wife of Joseph, by reason of the close

133 Filas, Joseph and Jesus, 1952: 26.
135 In terms of Scripture, particularly relevant is the account of the Finding of Jesus in the Temple where Mary openly refers to Jesus as Joseph’s son (Luke 2: 48-52).
alliance of their hearts, although not mingled in the flesh; and that the genealogy is traced down to Joseph rather than to her by reason of the dignity of the husband?\textsuperscript{137}

Blancus draws a close alignment between Mary and Jesus in his engraving. They are placed on the same level within the composition, their bodies turned towards one another in an expression of connection and mutuality. Considering their visual connection in conjunction with Jesus’ placement beneath Joseph directly conveys Gracián’s argument that Joseph’s role as Mary’s husband entitles him to be called Jesus’ father, whom he keeps under his protection.

The artistic subject of Joseph’s role as Mary’s spouse prefigures the \textit{Summary}. A prominent example is found in the \textit{Mérode Altarpiece or Annunciation Triptych} (Plate 2.13); painted between 1427 and 1432, it is attributed to the Master of Flémalle and is held in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.\textsuperscript{138} This work depicts the scene of the Annunciation, with an angel appearing to Mary who is reading. The outer left panel features a couple, possibly the work’s patrons, arriving at the home. The most curious element in this work, perhaps, is the depiction of the elderly and dignified Joseph hard at work in his carpenter’s shop in the right panel of the piece. The inclusion of Joseph in a scene of the Annunciation is unusual, and through this choice the artist indicates that at this moment Joseph and Mary are already living as a married couple. Here, Joseph is presented in the act of drilling holes in a wooden board, which art historian Meyer Schapiro identifies as a device for baiting fish, an object which would have been recognised by the work’s original audience.\textsuperscript{139}

Furthermore, on Joseph’s workbench lies a small object which Schapiro states is a mousetrap, explaining its presence with a metaphorical quote from Augustine: “The cross of the Lord was the devil’s mousetrap; the bait by which he was caught was the Lord’s death.”\textsuperscript{140} While this depiction acts as a representation of Joseph as the hard-working craftsman, it also has theological significance, with the trap itself representing Joseph’s key role, by virtue of being

\textsuperscript{137} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae}, 1947: IIIa, Q.31, art. 2, ad. 1.


\textsuperscript{139} Meyer Schapiro, “A Note on the \textit{Mérode Altarpiece}”, \textit{The Art Bulletin} 41 (4) (Dec. 1959): 327. The inclusion of a recognisable object relevant to the work’s original audience enables the \textit{Mérode Altarpiece} to function in the same way as many depictions of the Marriage presented in Chapter 1, making the subjects and the event personally relatable and meaningful for the spectator.

Mary’s spouse as a shield of the Divine Mystery in protecting Christ as his son, allowing the Redemption to occur, and thus baiting the Devil and sinfulness.\(^{141}\)

The role of Joseph in concealing the Divine Mystery of the Incarnation by virtue of his marriage to Mary is also conveyed in the *Summary*. Jesus is shown to grow to maturity under the watchful eye of Joseph, who nurtures and protects him as his own son. In doing so, he allows for Jesus’ true identity as the Son of God to be concealed until the proper time. It is Joseph’s role as Mary’s husband that enables him to offer this protection, and Blancus offers a visual communication of this through the relationships conveyed between each of the members of the Holy Family.

**Joseph’s fatherhood of good works**

The final office described by Gracián is that of father of good works. Gracián introduces his description of this office with the statement that “when a man does a great service for another person, the recipient is indebted and obliged to him much as to a father.”\(^{142}\) He indicates that both Mary and Jesus held an obligation to Joseph. Mary, he writes, owed more to Joseph than she did to her own parents because he did so many things for her and so, in this way, became like a father to her.\(^{143}\) Gracián indicates that Joseph’s love and the many good works he offered made it possible for Jesus to call him father. Through this love, Gracián writes, Jesus’ life was spared from Herod’s wrath and therefore Jesus in a way owes his life to Joseph; additionally, Gracián outlines Joseph’s particular good works of “rearing, supporting, regaling, and loving Jesus with the most affectionate love that any father has ever had for a son”.\(^{144}\)

Gracián emphasises that Joseph, as a father of good works, was able to converse with Jesus and was witness to secrets and mysteries that Jesus’ disciples were simply unable to comprehend.\(^{145}\) Furthermore, he explains in a somewhat propagandistic tone: “And I hold as certain that if you put all the love that natural fathers have for their children in a balance, and weighed it only against the true love of Joseph for Jesus, you would find Joseph’s love to be


greater”, in fact, “the deepest love a father could have for his son.”146 The depth of Joseph’s love is perhaps most clearly communicated by Blancus in his inclusion of Joseph not as an impartial observer of the scene, but as a full participant in the life of the family.

The Scriptural basis for this final office can be identified not only in the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, but also in Luke’s account of Mary and Joseph’s discovery of the child Jesus in the temple of Jerusalem after an agonising three-day search.

> When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.” He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour (Luke 2:48-52).

Significantly, Mary declares to Jesus that she and Joseph (“your father and I”) have been searching for him “in great anxiety”. These words emphasise not only that Mary recognises Joseph’s paternal authority but also that Joseph, in his “great anxiety”, holds genuine concern for Jesus as his son.147 Her open reference to Joseph as Jesus’ father is viewed here as an indication of her submission to Joseph’s authority as head of the family, even though she knows the truth of Jesus’ paternity.

The role of Joseph as father of good works is challenged in the apocryphal narratives. Returning once again to the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, we find that Joseph’s affection for Jesus is conditional. He is only described as showing tenderness or affection towards the child, embracing and kissing him, after Jesus performs a miracle. Further, Joseph’s expression of thanksgiving at the presence of Jesus (“Happy am I that God has given me this child”) is entirely dependent on having received a personal benefit: Jesus instructing and helping Joseph in his work.148 Joseph only expresses gratitude and joy at being the father of Jesus after he himself has been rewarded. This gratitude is therefore, like his fatherly affection, conditional.

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Patristic writers also engaged with the subject of Joseph as a father of good works. The writings of Ephrem indicate there was a developing interest in the pathos of the Nativity and in demonstrations of tenderness for the Christ Child. He writes that while Joseph held and nurtured Jesus as a baby, he also served him as God, rejoicing in Him as the Good One, yet awestruck at He who is the Just One.\textsuperscript{149} These words communicate the deep reverence and affection Joseph held for Jesus, qualities which are also conveyed in Gracián’s analysis and in the engraving.

The writing of Bernardine of Siena also features a reflection of Joseph as a father of good works. In a touching passage, Bernardine emphasises the deep joy Joseph felt at caring for Jesus as his father and at receiving love from the child.

> Who would deny, I ask, that as Joseph held Christ in his arms like a father and spoke baby talk or conversed with him as his father, Christ, whether as an infant or an adult, heaped and impressed on him ineffable feelings and joys, this while the external grace of Christ worked together with his filial appearance, talk, and embrace? Oh, how many sweet kisses Joseph received from him! Oh, with how much sweetness he heard the little babbling child call him father!\textsuperscript{150}

The Joseph that Bernardine presents here is not a distant figure, disconnected from and disinterested in his child, but as clearly desiring and enjoying a relationship with Jesus, who he does not hesitate to hold, speak with, embrace, or kiss. This characterisation perhaps reflects the social interactions marking the period. It could even be argued that such a representation offers to the reader an image of the “ideal” relationship fathers should share with their children, as Joseph is presented as deeply involved and interested in the raising of Jesus and as by no means hesitant to show him love and affection.

Joseph’s fatherhood also began to be addressed in popular scenes of him performing domestic duties, such as preparing food or a bath for the Child Jesus. These scenes took their inspiration from cradle-rocking plays and rituals performed during the Christmas season, which sought to express both Incarnation theology within an ordinary, everyday context, and Joseph’s own imitation of the maternal role of Mary.\textsuperscript{151} In this context, the maternal Joseph was often made

\textsuperscript{149} Theresa Kenney, “The Manger as Calvary and Altar in the Middle English Nativity Lyric”, \textit{The Christ Child in Medieval Culture: Alpha et O’}, ed. Mary Dzon and Theresa M. Kenney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012): 83.


\textsuperscript{151} Drage Hale, “Joseph as Mother”, 1996: 104.
the subject of ridicule, with one particular chronicle describing him as an elderly man being pushed into lighting a fire and feeding porridge to the Child, yet the food is too hot and Joseph and the Child engage in a fistfight, the Child easily winning against the feeble man. This particular depiction shows Joseph unwilling to perform domestic duties which are “submissive, nurturing and unmanly”, and making simple errors when coerced. The description of Joseph and Jesus in a physical scuffle, while likely designed to convey a comic element, can further be seen to express the prevailing social perception of the saint. In a sense, by fighting with Jesus Joseph can be seen to be preoccupied with preserving his masculinity and with asserting his paternal authority. Therefore, the fact that he loses this fight to a child conveys not only a physical weakness, but also a lack of masculine and fatherly dominance.

Elizabeth L’Estrange notes that women’s physiology was equated by Aristotelian philosophy with lack of reason and passivity, and she indicates that the idea of a man taking on a “feminine” position and, conversely, a woman taking up a “masculine” one, was a persistent cause for anxiety throughout the Middle Ages. The air of this scene, in which Joseph fails to successfully perform maternal duties and to assert his masculine dominance over his son, is thus one of failure on his part. It also clearly works to present him as the antithesis to the masculine stereotypes outlined by Douglas Blow earlier in this chapter. Joseph particularly does not convey dominance, power, order, reason; conversely, in this scene it is the Child Jesus who is the more powerful masculine figure when read in accordance with his fulfilment of the established stereotype. The father becomes an active member of the family, and in doing so contradicts the preceding representation of fathers as distant, manly figures who do not occupy themselves with menial tasks.

Representations of Joseph as an earthy, simple and at times comical figure were prominent within early Renaissance and particularly Netherlandish art. Sometimes featured as an ugly and elderly old man, and often much smaller than Mary, Joseph was usually relegated to the background of images; these features allow for the assumption that Joseph is disconnected from and disinterested in the events taking place around him. Frans Floris’s depiction of the Holy

152 Drage Hale, “Joseph as Mother”, 1996: 06.
153 Joseph’s loss against Jesus can also be taken to indicate that Joseph has been usurped by God.
Family (Plate 2.14), completed around 1554 and held in the Musée de la Chartreuse in Douai, shows a grotesquely-featured Joseph leering over his young wife who cradles the infant Jesus in her arms. Joseph’s slightly peaked cap arguably conveying his Jewishness. The scene of the Adoration of the Magi depicted on a panel of the St Thomas Altarpiece in Hamburg (Plate 2.15) shows the majestically enthroned, gloriously haloed Virgin holding the infant Jesus, who takes a gift from one of the Magi kneeling reverently before him. Beside Mary, Joseph is portrayed as diminutive, with his simple hood and tunic contrasting against her lavish robes. The artist portrays Joseph seated on a low stool, his body turned away from the centre of the composition. With his left hand he opens a small wooden chest, while extending his right hand to take the gift from the infant Jesus. The artist here presents Joseph as somewhat greedy, more interested in the opulent gifts than in the birth of Jesus.

The Hours of Catherine of Cleves (ca. 1440), which is housed at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York, contains two remarkably intimate illuminations of the Holy Family (Plate 2.16 and 2.17). The first scene places the Holy Family in a room crowded with furniture and kitchen utensils; before a burning fire, Mary nurses the Baby Jesus while Joseph reclines in an armchair, holding a bowl of food and a spoon. The second scene shows Jesus taking his first steps in a walker, with Mary watching on and Joseph busy working with tools and wood. In both scenes Mary’s role as nurturer and life-giver are strongly emphasised through her tender interaction with Jesus, whose inclusion within the same space as Joseph works to establish him as a bridge between Mary and Joseph. Arguably, the first assumption when considering the depiction of Joseph in these scenes is that his body language, occupation and placement within the scene work to separate him from Mary and Jesus, making him an onlooker or spectator to their close interaction. This may not, however, have been the artist’s intention. In the first scene, Joseph may not be eating, but instead preparing food for the Child in a tender display of intimacy which corresponds to the iconographic type of nutritor Domini.

Joseph’s labour in the second scene may again be read as communicative of his nurturing and

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156 Alberti, “Divine Cuckolds”, 2014: 150. While medieval artists working from the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries used pointed or peaked caps to identify a Jewish person, Sara Lipton indicates there is little evidence to suggest that any Jew who did cover their head for whatever reason would have worn anything distinctively “Jewish”. Pointed headgear, like that which Joseph wears, was frequently used to denote and align Jews and merchants, and thus to convey the Jewish people as avaricious and lacking in compassion. This characterisation is not completely absent from Floris’s depiction of a lecherous Joseph. See Lipton, Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014): 16, 19, 145.  
providing role. These scenes may then, in fact, convey intimacy and harmony rather than disconnection and disinterest on Joseph’s part.

Similar is the scene of the Adoration of the Magi, depicted on the left wing of the fourteenth-century Bargello Diptych (Plate 2.18), which was painted by an unknown French artist and is now housed in the Museo Nazionale in Florence. Here Joseph is presented as a small figure at the base of the painting. As is customary in scenes of this type, his size and dress contrast against the larger Madonna and Magi who are resplendent in voluminous robes. Seated by a small fire, which he may well be tending or using to heat food for the Child, Joseph gazes up at the adoring Magi while doffing his cap in a gesture of welcome. Interpreted in this way, this painting also serves to communicate Joseph’s roles of nutritor Domini and protector of Mary and Jesus.

Melchior Broederlam’s fourteenth-century depiction of the Flight into Egypt (Plate 2.19) which is found on the outer wing of the Retable de Champmol, now held in the Musée de la Ville in Dijon, is also worth considering. It shows the haloed Mary wrapped in a large blue mantle, seated upon a donkey and cradling the infant Jesus in her arms, while Joseph, who is dressed in a simple tunic, hat and boots, drinks out of a small bottle as he leads the party. This particular depiction of Joseph was described in Erwin Panofsky’s Early Netherlandish Painting, where it is noted that “The rustic, gloriously bearded St Joseph, burdened with blankets and a kettle, drinks water from a little canteen, the duplicates of which can be seen in France and Belgium when lower-middle-class families venture upon Puy-de-Dôme or to the seashore.” While Broederlam’s incorporation of identifiable cultural elements such as the canteen within his composition can be interpreted as a means of demeaning or lessening Joseph, it perhaps also stands as a useful tool by which the characters of the scene become more relatable. This realistic Joseph, who swigs from a canteen typically used by lower-middle-class Flemish and Belgians, is presented by Broederlam as one of them. The Holy Family, therefore, becomes Flemish.

158 Snyder, Northern Renaissance Art, 1985: 35, pl. 5.
159 The prototype of this figure is found in representations of the month of February in calendars contained within Books of Hours. February is often personified as a figure, usually an elderly man, warming himself at a fire. See, for example, the 14th century French psalter held at the Bibliothèque Nationale (NAF 4600), the fifteenth-century Book of Hours held at the Bibliothèque de Genève (MS. Lat 33, fol. 2r), and the sixteenth-century French psalter at the Morgan Library (MS. M. 197, fol. 1v).
160 Snyder, Northern Renaissance Art, 1985: 39, pl. 12.
Panofsky later revisits Broederlam’s treatment of Joseph in his discussion of Campin’s *Mérode Altarpiece*. Here he indicates that artworks such as the *Bargello Diptych* and the altarpiece of Champmol, in their representations of a diminutive, earthy Joseph who is often placed on the fringes of the scene and disconnected from Mary and Jesus, sought to present the saint as some sort of comic relief.\(^{162}\)

[Broederlam and his contemporaries] had treated St Joseph as an object of condescension or mild fun, pathetically immersed in his worries or trying to make himself useful as a substitute cook or nursemaid…from the beginning of the fifteenth century he began to be extolled as the component of all the homely virtues, invested with the modest dignity of a good craftsman and bread winner.\(^{163}\)

These examples from art and from miracles plays demonstrate an important function. The Joseph who performs seemingly maternal duties, such as rocking the Christ Child in his cradle or preparing food for the family, is presented as a successful manifestation of the *imitatio Mariae*, or imitation of Mary.\(^{164}\) Such a representation stresses to the male spectator that it is his duty to care for the Christ Child in an imitation of Mary who, in contrast with the frequent literary and artistic representations of an incompetent Joseph, is presented as nurturing and sensible.\(^{165}\)

The *Summary*’s open references to Joseph’s displays of intimacy and affection with the Child Jesus, noting particularly Gracián’s references to Chrysostom and Book II’s visual depiction of Joseph and Jesus working together, presents a direct challenge to the miracle plays’ depiction of Joseph’s reluctance to perform nurturing tasks for the child and, of course, contrasts with references to physical violence. Further, it challenges the frequent visual portrayal of an inept, earthy and almost undignified Joseph. Unlike the apocrypha, miracle plays and artworks which represent Joseph as a fearful man, incompetent in his trade and occupying the periphery of family life, the *Summary*, particularly through Blancus’ engraving, places Joseph at the centre of the family, casting him as a full participant who shares closely and intimately in the lives of Mary and Jesus. He is not sidelined but fully integrated into the composition. These elements strongly reflect the office of fatherhood of good works, indicating that Joseph, by virtue of his

\(^{162}\) This particular view has been challenged in more recent scholarship. Wilson (*St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 65-67; 213 n115) draws attention to the fortified hill, falling idol, and steep path in Broederlam’s panel, which she notes are indicative of the arduous labours of the Holy Family. Joseph guides Mother and Child through this difficult terrain while sustaining himself for his trials.


\(^{164}\) Drage Hale, “Joseph as Mother”, 1996: 106.

active participation in the family unit, offers great love and service to Mary and Jesus and receives the same from them in return.

Sixteenth-century relationships between fathers and their children are often viewed as having been loveless, cold, and domineered by the authority of the father. There is some evidence to show that during this period greater focus was being placed on affectionate and tender interactions between a father and his child. Printing generated a wealth of literature intended to guide the wealthy and middle classes in family life, and while most advocated the duty of subservience a child held to their parents and a wife to her husband they did encourage mutual affection, care and concern within the family unit.\footnote{Black, \textit{Early Modern Europe}, 2001: 117.} It is difficult to know the true nature of parent-child relationships in the years leading up to and during the sixteenth century. There is evidence that births were celebrated joyfully, and that the death of children was treated with shock and grief, but it is difficult to know whether these are unusual instances.\footnote{In his \textit{Ricordi}, Giovanni Marelli describes the joy over the conception and birth of his firstborn son, Alberto, and his deep grief at the death of the child ten years later. On the death of the child, Marelli agonises that he did not make his son happier and pay more attention to him. Similarly, the death of Valerio, the eight-year-old son of the Venetian patrician and military leader Jacopo Antonio Marcello, sent his father into shock. A number of humanist writers, including the leading female humanist Isotta Nogarola of Verona, produced a collection of writings aimed to console Jacopo in his grief. Black, \textit{Early Modern Europe}, 2001: 121.}

Blancus’ singling out of this scene as one of only six illustrated types in the \textit{Summary}, and as the visualisation of Joseph’s title as “Father of Jesus”, achieves several aims. The visualisation of Joseph the artisan performing his trade, in the company of Mary and Jesus and with Jesus assisting him, bestows upon carpentry dignity and honour, a representation which aligns particularly with Gracián’s emphasis given to Joseph and Jesus’ practice of the trade, and which would have been of particular significance for the members of the confraternity. Further, Blancus’s unification of the Holy Family within a small, intimate space communicates Gracián’s description of the stability and affection present among Jesus, Mary and Joseph, qualities which are shown to be both desirable and imitable. Therefore, Book II of the \textit{Summary} works to contradict the downplaying, rejection, or ignorance of Joseph’s paternal role by presenting the saint not only as endowed with his fatherly role over Jesus, but also performing his responsibilities as a father successfully and completely. These connections would undoubtedly have stressed to the \textit{Summary}’s initial audience the dignity of physical labour and of Joseph’s fatherhood.
Book II of the *Summary of the Excellencies of St Joseph* emphasises, through the emblematic interaction between text, image, and epigram, the role of Joseph the artisan as a typology of the Divine Creator. The essential message conveyed in Book II is not simply that Joseph is the rightful father of Jesus, but also that these rights are bestowed upon him by none other than God the Father, the Divine Artisan. The successful communication of the ten offices of fatherhood in the engraving and epigram successfully enables Book II to fulfil its emblematic function.
CHAPTER THREE: JUST MAN

The third title given Joseph by Gracián in his *Summary* is that of “just man”. References to Joseph’s justice are found primarily in the Gospel of Matthew, and particularly in the account of Joseph’s deliberations and actions following the discovery of Mary’s pregnancy (Matt 1:18-25). Matthew’s Gospel uses the adjective, *díkaios*, which is translated as “just”, “righteous”, or “innocent”, more often than any other Gospel¹ and in passages that have no parallel.² The “just” or “righteous” Joseph, after discovering Mary’s pregnancy and not wanting to cause her shame, decides to separate himself from her “quietly” (1:19).³

This chapter will examine Joseph’s justice as represented in Book III of the *Summary*, noting how the text, engraving and epigram cooperate in reflecting and commenting upon various notions of ‘justice’ as described in Scriptural accounts, apocryphal narratives, writings of the Church Fathers, and relevant artistic representations of Joseph’s justice. Through this analysis, it will demonstrate how Book III of the *Summary* presents Joseph as a model of justice and virtue for the brethren of the Archconfraternity.

Following the compositional layout employed by Bianchi in his prior two engravings, this scene (Plate 3) also arranges the Holy Family within a triangular structure. However, in this case it is the boy Jesus who forms the apex with Mary and Joseph on the sides. It has already been indicated in previous discussion that the triangle works as a powerful symbol of harmony and stability, explicitly referencing the Trinity.

Joseph is seated on the left, looking upwards at Jesus while extending his hand towards Mary. His slightly parted lips and demonstrative gesture are visually evocative of speech, and suggest that Joseph is making some sort of declaration, presumably to Christ about his mother. Mary

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¹ Matthew uses *dikaios* nineteen times, compared to just two occurrences in Mark. See Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1997: 125.
³ Brown (The Birth of the Messiah, 1997: 128) notes that according to rabbinic writings, a writ of repudiation had to be delivered before two witnesses, and therefore a divorce could not be entirely secret. Further, Joseph could not have hidden Mary’s shame indefinitely, as her pregnancy would sooner or later have become public knowledge. Brown indicates that Matthew’s wording most likely stresses that in divorcing Mary Joseph was not going to accuse her publicly of adultery and would thereby not subject her to trial. Additionally, Daniel J. Harrington S.J. argues that Joseph’s embarrassment and plans to divorce Mary “quietly” may indicate that he suspected she had been raped or seduced. See Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., “Matthew”, *Collegeville Biblical Commentary: New Testament*, Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. (ed.), (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992): 864.
is situated on the right and lowers her gaze towards Joseph’s hand. The gazes of Mary and
Joseph, along with their gestures and postures, effectively draws the eye in a circular movement
around the composition. Jesus stands between them, his arms extended and his hands coming
to rest on their shoulders; this gesture, along with the placement of the figures within an
unidentifiable setting, casts this engraving as a parallel of the marriage scene in which the arms
of God guide Mary and Joseph together. The unification of the three figures, as in the first
engraving, creates a mandorla. The accompanying epigram reads *Vir iustus, puero a iusto, cum
virgine iusta, celsa Joseph tenuit culmina iusticiae*, “Joseph, the just man, attained the lofty
heights of justice with the just Virgin by the just Child.”

The engraving’s presentation of the Holy Family in familiar conversation is inspired by a
passage from Gracián’s text which, at the same time, works as a commentary on the image
itself:

*Abbiamo più volte già detto, come anco diremo nell’avvenire, che in quel modo
stesso che Maria e Giosef si portavano nell’esteriore con Christo, così similmente
erano verso Dio nell’interiore de loro cuori. Tenevano il suo figliuolo Gesù in
mezzo di loro, e erano a giusa di quei due Serafini, nel mezzo di quali stava il trono
di Dio...perche mai creatura alcuna praticò,accompagnò, ne godè Christo, più di
Maria i Giosef. Ne in alcuno mai si ritrovò quel la fede si grande, quell’oratione,
quella mortificatione,quella pietà, quell’imitation di Christo, e finalmente quella
carità, come su in loro. Dunque certa cosa è, che, niuna creatura su mai si
altamente unita con Dio, con Maria e Giosef.*

[We have at times already spoken, and will speak again, of the manner in which
Mary and Joseph conversed exteriorly with Christ, and in a similar way with God
interiorly in their hearts. They would hold the Child Jesus in the middle of them,
and their souls would be like two Seraphim, in the middle of which was the throne
of God... No creature came into closer contact with Christ, accompanied him, or
enjoyed his presence more than Mary and Joseph. In no one is found the faith,
prayer, mortification, piety, the imitation of Christ, and the charity which Mary and
Joseph had. Therefore, it is certain that no creature had enjoyed greater union with
God than that which was experienced by Mary and Joseph.]

Additionally, Gracián notes:

*Pues habiendo tenido Joseph al mismo Dios en lugar de hijo, y a el, y a su madre
por proximos, con quien siempre comunico y de quien apren dio la rectitud de la
justicia.*

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[St Joseph had God Himself as his son, and Jesus and the Virgin Mary close, with whom he interacted constantly and from whom he learned the uprightness of justice.]

What is notable in this emblematic representation is the relatability, mutuality, and connection established between the figures. In the above passages, Gracián notes that Joseph and Mary place Jesus “in the middle of them”, thus flanking him and supporting him equally. Therefore, both of them, not simply one or the other, enjoyed the closest contact and union with Christ imaginable, and Joseph “learned the uprightness of justice” from Mary and Jesus, those closest to him “with whom he interacted constantly.”

In its approach to Joseph’s justice the Summary reflects the view of St Albert the Great. Gracián writes:

St Albert the Great focuses on the two words used in Scripture to describe Joseph: “just man” (Matt 1:19). According to Albert, these two words prove that all virtues are found in Joseph. Joseph is called “man”, Albert says, because he was constant. Constancy encompasses fortitude, confidence in God, magnanimity, perseverance, and all the other noble virtues that perfect the soul. “Just” means that Joseph is faithful. If he is faithful to God, he is perfect in faith and in divine love. If he is faithful to his neighbour, Joseph is perfect in charity and in justice, which are the source of all virtues that concern the neighbour.

Gracián continues in describing Joseph as the aggregate of all virtues. He explains that justice is the highest virtue, from which springs the virtues comprising constancy and faithfulness.

This chapter will demonstrate, through its analysis of the text, engraving and epigram of Book III, how Joseph is interpreted as the embodiment of these virtues of fortitude and perseverance, confidence in and faithfulness to God, and magnanimity and faithfulness to others, and thereby how he is presented as ‘the aggregate of all virtues’: a just man.

Matthew 1:19 openly connects Joseph’s justice with his decision to divorce Mary without scandal or public attention. Divorce was, most likely, the only conceivable option available to him. During the period, in which preservation of reputation and honour was of utmost importance, he would have been justified in divorcing Mary if he suspected her of adultery.
and possibly even expected to do so publicly. Divorce proceedings were carried out on the male’s initiative and accompanied by public procedure and trial. If a man and woman were found to have committed adultery, both were condemned to death in accordance with the Book of Deuteronomy (22:22-24). We thus see a conflict in the just Joseph: a desire to uphold the doctrine of the law, but at the same time a motivation, arguably by mercy, to adhere to the law in a way which would cause Mary minimal shame.

Tarcisio Stramare notes that the term “just” exists in a relationship of “mutual interdependence” with Joseph’s decision to renounce Mary, and with the knowledge he has of the mystery. It can thus be proposed that Matthew’s terming of Joseph as “just” is not at all coincidental or casual, but intended to expose and establish connections between humble figures of the Old and New Testament who surrendered themselves completely to the will of God.

An interpretation of Joseph’s title “just man” is also found in the writings of Saint John Chrysostom, to whom Gracián gives significant reference. Chrysostom’s interpretation of the title “just man” is insightful and unusual for its length, although he does not regard the marriage of Joseph and Mary as true. He writes in his fourth homily on the Gospel of Matthew:

‘Joseph, her husband, being a just man’. By ‘a just man’ in this place he means him that is virtuous in all things. For both freedom from covetousness is justice, and universal virtue is also justice; and it is mostly in this latter sense that the Scripture uses the name of justice…Being then ‘just’, that is a just man’, that is good and considerate, ‘he was minded to put her away privily.’…For so far from punishing, he was not minded even to make an example of her. Seest thou a man under self-restraint and freed from the most tyrannical of passions…He was so free from passion as to be unwilling to grieve the Virgin even in the least matters.

11 Matthew’s term “dikaios” was typically used in connection with the Old Testament people of faith who longed for the fulfilment of the Messianic promise, and with the disciples who have received the promise of salvation. The term is used in connection to God Himself, His chosen people, and to specific individuals including Noah, who does everything commanded him by God (Gen 6:9, 7:1), Tamar, who disguises herself as a prostitute in order to bear a child in Judah’s line (Gen 38:26), and King David, who spares the life of Saul (1 Sam 24:17). In his study of Joseph’s title as an upright man, Brown notes that Matthew’s genealogy names four women, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, who acted as preparation for Mary’s role in the begetting of the Messiah. In two of these instances, however, the man involved was not upright (in fact, in Gen 38:26 Judah exclaims that “Tamar is more upright than I”). This contrasts with the parents of Jesus, who are both identified as “models of virtue”. See Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, 1997: 125; Toschi, Joseph in the New Testament, 1991: 447.
12 Filas, Joseph, the man closest to Jesus, 1962: 383. Due to the limitations and scope of this paper, this subject will not be discussed in further detail.
Thus, according to Chrysostom, Joseph’s justice does not simply indicate that he is righteous or honest, but that he is virtuous in every sense; there are several instances in Scripture where this virtue is revealed. Joseph’s decision to quietly separate from Mary after her pregnancy is discovered indicates his sensitivity and faithfulness to God’s law, to the sanctity of marriage, and to Mary’s reputation. He does, however, need the directive of the angel to pursue his marriage to Mary, and even in this instance his virtue is apparent: he does not question, but rises from sleep and acts immediately. In taking Mary as his wife, he accepts Jesus as his son, even though he may not understand exactly the origins of the child or the meaning of doing so. Edward Healy Thompson argues that it is from Joseph’s righteousness that he is given the ability to act out of the three theological virtues: walking in faith in the presence of God, expecting the Messiah with hope, and striving to the best of his ability to make Christ loved by others. Gracián references this interpretation in his argument that Joseph exhibits the summit of all virtues in that he does not want to offend, neither God nor others, by word, deed, or thought. He does not challenge, contradict, or question, but is silent and listens. In this way, he can be seen to fulfil the masculine convention of silence and stoicism, which communicated the idea that men should not reveal their true nature or thought.

Saint Thomas Aquinas also expounds upon Joseph’s justice; in several of his writings, he examines the virtue of justice as well as its components. His Catena on Matt 1:1-19 bears reference to Chrysostom’s argument that the term “just” meant that Joseph was virtuous in all ways, and further, his Catena on Luke 2:4-5 quotes St Ambrose, who stressed that Joseph was the just man “who kept the word.”

In his review of Joseph’s justice, Aquinas attributes to him several virtues:

1. Religion, in that both Joseph and Mary made a vow of virginity;
2. Piety, which is inseparable from justice, shown in Joseph’s reverence for Mary and his consideration of sending her away privately;
3. Obedience, or an orderly, quick, perfect, and discreet reverence for persons of dignity;

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15 Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 87.
16 Blow, On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy, 2015: 8.
4. Veracity, or truthfulness, which is demonstrated by a person’s life or conversation;
5. Liberality or poverty, shown through Joseph and Mary’s virginity and their giving of the offering of the poor;
6. Virginity itself. 

Like Thomas, Albert the Great asserts that Joseph’s title of “just” communicates his faithfulness to God and neighbour, and ultimately his charity and justice, the source of all virtues concerning the neighbour. Therefore, he stresses that through this title of “just man” Joseph is seen to possess all moral and theological virtues. This view finds an expression in the epigram accompanying the engraving for Book III, which states that Joseph attained the “lofty heights” of justice and thereby indicates that he possessed the highest quality of this virtue.

The fortitude of Joseph

Joseph’s justice is strengthened by his fortitude, in that he shows endurance and strength even when faced with an uncertain or difficult situation. It is Joseph’s fortitude which, as stated by Albert the Great, contributes to his title as “man”; in this way, then, fortitude is presented here as a masculine virtue, and as intrinsically linked to and inspiring the virtue of justice.

Blancus visualises Joseph’s fortitude in his engraving through his depiction of the saint’s physical strength. Joseph wears a short tunic, which exposes his muscular legs, as well as a cape, the edge of which falls over his arm. In his right hand, he firmly holds a staff, its angled, strong line creating a vector directing the viewer’s eye inward from the work’s border to Joseph’s face. Gracián directly communicates Joseph’s fortitude, along with his other virtues, in his description of Joseph as the “last stone” above which is placed the cornerstone of the building and of the Church: Jesus.

y sumaron todas las perfecciones de los padres antiguos, y se hallaron recogidas las virtudes de todos ellos: la fe de Abraham, confianza de Isaac, caridad de Jacob, castidad de Josep, mansedumbre de Moisèes, fortaleza de Gideon, spiritu de Elias, devoción de David, y todas las demás excelencias de los otros padres.

[[In Joseph] is found the sum of all perfection of the ancient fathers and the virtues of them all: the faith of Abraham, the confidence of Isaac, the charity of Jacob, the

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20 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 147.
chastity of Joseph, the meekness of Moses, the fortitude of Gideon, the spirit of
Elijah, the devotion of David, and all the excellences of the other fathers.]

This description, particularly Gracián’s reference to Joseph’s fortitude, may perhaps find a
visual link in the depiction of Joseph seated beneath Jesus, whose central placement in the
scene acts as a conceivable allusion to Gracián’s description of him as the “cornerstone”.

The cardinal virtues of fortitude, justice, prudence and temperance were a prominent feature of
ancient and medieval discussion and thought. In his Politics, Aristotle indicates that while
women do possess moral virtues, particularly fortitude, justice and temperance, they possess
them only menially (virtutes ministrative) and insofar as they help them complete their servile
tasks. In contrast, the moral virtues of a man enable them to fulfil roles of domestic and
political leadership (virtutes principative). Building on Aristotle, Ambrose emphasised that
fortitude comprised not only military prowess, as demonstrated by Old Testament figures such
as David, but also mental strength, which he stressed is upheld by priests and to a perfect degree
by martyrs. He describes fortitude as that which “wages an inexorable war on all vice,
undeterred by toil, brave in face of dangers, steeled against pleasures, unyielding to lusts,
avoiding covetousness as a deformity that weakens virtue”, but his use of a similar description
in connection with other vices leads to the view that he does not regard fortitude as a special
virtue. A different approach is seen in the writings of Augustine: he does not approach the
virtues as an exegetical matter, but as a means by which the soul is freed from earthly
entrapments in order to cling to God. Fortitude is here emphasised as strength in the face of
great force or adversity that may prevent a person from reaching God. According to Thomas
Aquinas in his Summa Theologica, this is visualised in martyrdom, the primary act of fortitude,
which embodies waging a personal war on behalf of God, even one which is not dedicated to
the pursuit of the common good.

21 Gracián, Sumario, 1597: 112.
24 István P. Bejczy, The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: a study in moral thought from the fourth to the
25 Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1947: Ia-Iæ, Q.123, art. 2.
27 Martin Jacobsson, Aurelius Augustinus, De musica liber VI: a critical edition with a translation and
28 Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1947: Ia-Iæ, Q.123, art. 5.
Although the theological and cardinal virtues and other esteemed female attributes, such as Prudence, Wisdom and Modesty, were linguistically gendered as female in the vernacular,\(^{29}\) the virtues of Fortitude and Justice were socially gendered as male.\(^{30}\) In art, Fortitude was traditionally visualised as female with masculine attributes, seemingly resulting from Latin’s feminisation of abstract qualities. Prominent examples of this are found in Giotto’s 1305 fresco for the Scrovegni chapel (Plate 3.1), in which Fortitude stands dressed in armour and behind a raised shield, prepared for attack, and Sandro Botticelli’s painting for the Tribunale della Mercanzia (Plate 3.2), completed in 1470 and now housed in the Uffizi Gallery, which depicts a an armour-clad, enthroned and pensive Fortitude.\(^{31}\) This traditional visualisation of Fortitude as female was contradicted by Nicola Pisano, who in 1250 included a sculpture of the virtue in his Pisa Baptistry pulpit (Plate 3.3).\(^{32}\) It has been speculated that Nicola’s depiction of a heroic male nude in the Classical style is founded on a depiction of Hercules from a Roman sarcophagus, or on the figure of Hippolytus included in a Campo Santo sarcophagus.\(^{33}\) Here, the female Fortitude, who often is shown carrying a club, wearing a lion skin, or demonstrating another attribute of strength, is substituted for an idealised male nude, standing in contrapposto stance and supporting a lion on his shoulder. The masculinised, virile Fortitude encourages a more natural association of this virtue with military conduct, which was an exclusively male pursuit, and directly symbolised the warrior class.\(^{34}\) Perhaps this gender shift encouraged Fortitude to appeal easily to masculine audiences, who would arguably have more readily identified with a male Fortitude than a female one.

Fortitude has long been appropriated as an attribute of the virtuous and of primarily male saints. Its description as a virtue of the extraordinary character of the martyrs reflected the focus of the early Church on martyred saints, beginning with Stephen and James and continuing through the thousands who died under the emperors Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian.\(^{35}\) These were

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\(^{29}\) They were stylised as Prudenzia, Sapienza and Modesta.


men and women who had lived heroic lives, with undoubtedly the greatest expression of their virtue being their fortitudinous death for their faith; in giving up their lives for God, they were shown to demonstrate admirable strength and perseverance.

A particularly strong example of fortitude in the lives of the saints is found in the story of Mark the Evangelist. Tradition indicates that Mark, who was not an Apostle but a companion of Paul and Barnabas and later a disciple of Peter’s who accompanied him to Rome, preached and converted many souls in Alexandria and was ultimately imprisoned and dragged through the streets to his death. In the *Golden Legend*, Jacobus de Voragine describes Mark as the “heavy hammer that breaks down the iron…strikes down the perfidy of the heretics, rings out the praises of God, and strengthens the Church.” In these words, de Voragine combines the quintessential elements of virtue and fortitude, which in turn indicates masculine strength. Mark is the hammer, the heavy instrument which is, through perseverance, able to break something seemingly impenetrable. Conveying him in this way brings his masculine power to the fore. Mark, by his strength, is able to break down heresies, proclaim God’s praises, and fortify the Church; attributes which emphasise the conventional and even prized masculine qualities of physical power, stability, and endurance.

De Voragine continues his account by explaining that Mark amputated his thumb so that he could not be made a priest, but “this rash act neither unmanned Mark nor prevented Peter from ordaining him bishop.” It is important to note de Voragine’s description of Mark not having been “unmanned” by such an action; in fact, his ordaining as bishop by Peter indicates that he possesses masculine qualities, such as leadership, in abundance. Artistic representation of Mark also sought to convey his masculine traits. A prominent example of this is Donatello’s *Saint Mark* (Plate 3.4) which was created between 1411 and 1413 for a niche in the façade of the Orsanmichele church in Florence. Standing at almost eight feet high and viewed from below, the bearded Mark gazes away from the viewer, a book held upon his left hip. The saint’s power and masculinity is conveyed by his strong brow and facial features, his large left hand, with the pulsing veins clearly visible, and his natural *contrapposto* stance. He appears almost to step out of the niche, the intensity of his expression and his powerful features conveying his authority and indicating his virtue. These depictions of Mark distinctly contrast against the

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characterisation of Joseph in the *Golden Legend* and in other devotional and apocryphal works. As has been previously indicated, Joseph is more often than not painted as Mary’s “custodian” or “guardian”, an incompetent worker and an ineffective father, and thus the masculine qualities conveyed by saints such as Mark are normally denied him.

That said, a prominent representation of Joseph’s fortitude is found in Michelangelo’s *Madonna and Child with St Joseph and John the Baptist* (c. 1507), which is more commonly known as the *Doni Tondo* (Plate 3.5) and is housed in the Uffizi Gallery.\(^{40}\) At its heart, this scene conveys a naturalism which emphasises not only the humanity of Christ, a lively boy who climbs on the shoulders of his parents, but also the parental qualities and strength of both Mary and Joseph. Michelangelo depicts an athletic-looking Mary, seated on the ground in the pose of a Madonna of Humility\(^{41}\) and between the legs of Joseph, looking up at the Christ Child who is climbing upon her shoulder and who rests his hands on her head.\(^{42}\) She supports the child with both hands, her powerful biceps and forearms given strong emphasis. Joseph looks at Jesus, who appears to be standing on Joseph’s knee. The power and movement conveyed in these figures, through their physiques, gestures and gazes, encourages the audience’s focus to easily flow across the work.

Although Joseph is presented here as an older man, balding and with a grey beard, he has been fully integrated by Michelangelo into the composition.\(^{43}\) Joseph is seated above Mary, and Mary’s placement directly between Joseph’s undeniably strong and powerful legs emphasises the role and virtue of the saint as the powerful protector and leader of the Holy Family. In this work, Joseph himself is the column of fortitude and justice upon which Mary rests and Jesus is supported. Here we again see another pyramidal composition, yet while Joseph is placed above Mary he seems to vie for the apex with Jesus, whose position on Mary’s shoulder places him almost on the same level as Joseph. The merging of Jesus and Joseph as the apex is not presented by Michelangelo as overwhelmingly competitive; rather, it seems to speak more of

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\(^{41}\) The image of the Madonna of Humility is classified as a “devotional image”, in that it seeks to create a direct and intimate emotional relationship between artwork and spectator. Depictions of the Madonna of Humility frequently show the Virgin nursing the Child, sometimes seated on the ground, and often with both Virgin and Child turning to look directly at the viewer. For additional discussion of this artistic type, see Chapter 7 (“The Madonna of Humility”) in Millard Meiss’s *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death: the Arts, Religion, and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century*, 132-156.


mutuality and respect which is stressed further by the closeness of the figures of Joseph and Mary.

Blancus’ work reflects the pyramidal and intimate compositional arrangement prefigured in Michelangelo’s tondo. Though Jesus is not in the centre of Michelangelo’s composition, as he is in Blancus’ work, he occupies the focus of Joseph’s gaze and relates to both Mary and Joseph with a physical intimacy similar to Blancus’ work. The close connection of the figures allows this artwork, like Blancus’ engraving, to be read as communicative of the mutuality and intimacy of the Holy Family and particularly of Mary and Joseph who, as Gracián states, converse exteriorly with Christ and interiorly with God in their souls. Both Blancus and Michelangelo portray Mary as physically prominent through her size and proximity to the viewer, yet Michelangelo highlights this even further through depicting her muscular physique. Further, Joseph’s strength and vigour, conveyed by Michelangelo primarily through his strong powerful legs and direct gaze towards Jesus, is also adopted in Blancus’ engraving through Joseph’s physical vitality, strong gaze, and commanding facial expression and gesture.

Joseph’s exercise of fortitude also finds an expression in representations which present him as Mary’s protector or “champion”, thereby illustrating his justice and unwillingness, as recorded in Scripture, to expose Mary to shame, ridicule or pain. A prominent reference of this virtue is demonstrated in Federico Barocci’s fresco of the Holy Family, completed between 1561 and 1563 and located at the centre of the ceiling of the Casino of Pius IV in the Vatican (Plate 3.6). Elizabeth presents the infant Baptist to the seated Madonna and Child, above whom an angel hovers, while a male figure observes from the background and another gazes out towards the viewer by the right of the work. In a posture which can be viewed as protective, Joseph stands by the right edge of the work, his body turned towards Mary and Jesus while he gazes out at the viewer over his left shoulder. He wears a robe which is draped over, but does not conceal, his muscular frame. His physique leaves no doubt for the viewer as to the extent of his strength and powerfully works to assert his masculinity and his authority. His outstretched left arm, with its muscles almost palpitating, holds the staff, a gesture which directs the eye to Mary, Jesus, and an angel depicted in the centre. Thus, Barocci’s Joseph is the means by which

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44 Wilson, St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2001: pl. 73. Wilson is the first scholar to have discussed this painting in terms of its focus on Joseph.
45 Wilson presents quite a convincing argument that the standing male figure is Joseph (see especially St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art, 2011: 80, 81-82). While this thesis works in keeping with Wilson’s approach, it acknowledges the argument of other scholars that this figure is in fact Zachariah, the husband of Mary’s cousin Elizabeth. See particularly the recent work on Barocci: Federico Barocci: Inspiration and Innovation in Early Modern Italy, ed. Judith W. Mann (New York: Routledge, 2017).
the viewer accesses the Virgin and Child. This is paralleled in Blancus’ etching, with Joseph’s powerful upward gaze to Jesus, his placement at the left edge of the composition and his gesture towards Mary all working to draw the viewer’s focus to Mary and Jesus.

Barocci’s Joseph rests his right hand upon a column, a traditional attribute of fortitude and perhaps also a reference to his masculine traits of constancy and stability, to the strength of the Jewish Law, to which Scripture indicates he strives to adhere, and to the power of his Davidic ancestry. The fact that Joseph is leaning on this column can thus be taken as a representation of the justice he demonstrates in upholding obedience to the Law and to the will of God, yet also paying close attention to his conscience. The column is partly concealed by a drawn curtain which can be perceived as a reference to the successful concealment of the mystery of the Incarnation which is achieved through Joseph’s taking of Mary as his wife, even though she was carrying a child not his own. A dog plays at his feet, perhaps representing the righteousness and fidelity Joseph showed towards Mary, first in striving to spare her from trial and punishment and second in providing her and Jesus with protection by taking her as his wife. The physically strong Joseph of the Summary is placed on the same level as Mary within the composition, and this depiction, in conjunction with his gesture towards her, encourages a visual relationship between the two figures. These compositional elements combine to further emphasise the fortitude Joseph embodies as Mary’s protector and as the head of the family unit.

**Joseph’s confidence in God**

Joseph’s faithfulness and confidence in God is depicted in Blancus’ engraving and in Morale’s epigram. Joseph is shown seated beneath Jesus and looking up at the Child, while Jesus’ hands rest on the shoulders of Joseph and Mary. The direction of Joseph’s gaze to Jesus, the Messiah through whom comes redemption for Israel, visualises Gracián’s reference to Saint Jerome where he argues that Joseph can be called “just” because, in the same way as the Old Testament Fathers, he participates in faith and devotion to the promised Messiah. Gracián stresses that Joseph, however, is even greater than these, as “he saw with his own eyes the salvation of Israel, and the light of revelation to the Gentiles.” Blancus’ depiction of Joseph’s eyes fixed on Jesus is a conceivable allusion to these words, communicating a deep relationship shared

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46 The symbols of the curtain and column became established features in iconography of the Holy Family, with a pertinent example being Raphael’s 1518 composition in which Joseph rests his elbow on a small pillar, a drawn curtain shown behind him. Such elements work to emphasise Joseph’s strength, constancy, and role in protecting and concealing the mystery of the Incarnation: qualities which, as Gracián indicates, distinctly connect to his justice.


between Joseph and Jesus, whom Joseph reveres as the Son of God. Further, Jesus’ hands, resting on the shoulders of Joseph and Mary, draw visual focus downwards through the two seated figures, thus enfolding them in a mandorla similar to that found in the first engraving. Additionally, the epigram states that Joseph, with Mary, attained “the lofty heights of justice…by the just Child”.

Gracián indicates that Joseph’s reverence for and union with God stems from his perfection. He writes that, according to the Doctors of the Church,

[La perfettione] è l’fiore di tutte le virtù, il colmo della carità, il fine della legge, e della religione, eccelenza dello spirito, termine del esercitio dell’oratione, porto della navigazione della mente, e il sommo di tutti quei beni.

[[Perfection] is the flower of all virtues, the height of charity, the order of the law and of religion, the excellence of the spirit, the end of the exercise of prayer, the door of the navigation of the mind, and the sum of all these goods.] 49

Such perfection, he continues, is a union between the soul and the Creator, who is:

il fine, l’eccellenza, il colmo, il porto e l’origine, è principio di tutte le cose create, e è infinitamente buono e perfetto.

[[the end, the excellence, the height, the door, and the origin and beginning of all created things, and who is infinitely good and perfect.] 50

These words correspond with Gracián’s prior description of Mary and Joseph, with Jesus between them, conversing interiorly in their souls with God. Blancus’ depiction of the physical closeness of the members of the Holy Family conveys this intimacy and the profound, deep relationship they share with one another, with God literally at the centre of their lives. Furthermore, the accompanying epigram makes reference to the mutuality of this family relationship in the fact that Joseph achieves justice and righteousness not on his own but with Mary and through Jesus. In this way, perhaps, the engraving, epigram and text de facto of Book III indicate to the Summary’s audience that they too can deepen their own virtues of justice and righteousness in the same way: through devotion to Jesus and Mary, and through the guidance of Joseph.

These depictions communicate the reverence Joseph holds for God and his complete submission to God’s will, which in turn instils in him virtue. Scripture demonstrates that Joseph

49 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 155.
50 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 155.
was ready to give up Mary in accordance with what he believed to be God’s will, and the Navarre commentary on the Gospel of Matthew goes further in indicating that Joseph knew Mary to be a holy woman and so her pregnancy ultimately left him with a situation he could not explain. His justice appears to spark in him a conflict between the law and his own conscience; while he clearly values the law, he does not accept it without consideration of his own conscience and of the primary placement of God’s will in his decision-making. Particular scholars, such as Michael Griffin, have drawn typological connections between Joseph’s surrendering of Mary and Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac in accordance with divine command. In both instances, Griffin states, God intervened at the appropriate time to help the weakness of His servant and bestows upon both Abraham and Joseph the name of “father”. While, as established in this work’s previous chapter, the Summary represents Joseph as the head of the Holy Family, he is also portrayed as open and submissive to the will of God by his focus on Jesus at the centre of his life. Additionally, the inclusion of the mandorla once more delineates the presence of a sacred space which effectively unifies heaven and earth, God and man, thus communicating the depth of relationship Mary and Joseph shared with Jesus in their hearts.

Respect or awe for God’s plan of salvation, and its role in the life of Joseph, was addressed by the ancient writers Eusebius, Ephrem and Theophylact. “Fear of the Lord” is consistently referenced in the Jewish scriptures, and the argument that Joseph’s reluctance to take Mary as his wife resulted directly from his reverence for God and from his knowledge that she was the woman chosen by God as the bearer of the Christ calls this to mind. This view, however, is not without its own problems. In Redemptoris Custos, Pope St John Paul II writes that as a “just man”, Joseph did not know how to treat Mary’s “astonishing” motherhood: while he tries to answer the unnerving question of her pregnancy, he ultimately seeks a way out of what is for him a difficult situation. In taking Mary as his wife, he acts in the clearest “obedience of

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53 Griffin, “Saint Joseph”, 1972: 230. Abraham is a “father in faith”, promised the legacy of many descendants by God (Gen 17:5-8), while upon Joseph, as we know, is bestowed the title “father of Jesus”.
55 It does not address how Joseph would have acquired the knowledge of Mary’s pregnancy and of its divine origins before he was commanded by the angel to take Mary as his wife (Matt 1:20). Raymond E. Brown also indicates that if Joseph did have knowledge of Mary’s pregnancy, he would naturally have received instruction to take Mary into his home and solemnise the marriage, leaving no reason for him to question the conception of Jesus. Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, 1997: 126.
faith”, accepting “as truth coming from God the very thing that she had already accepted at the Annunciation”.57

Through the statement that it is by Jesus, “the just Child”, that both Mary and Joseph attain “the lofty heights of justice”, Morale’s epigram communicates the role of relationship with and fear of God in acquiring virtue. These words indicate that it is only through Joseph’s reverence and awe of God that he can be titled “just man”.

Gracián also considers patristic approaches to Joseph’s confidence in God. He enters into a discussion of the following text from Augustine:

To be sure, because he knew that she was not pregnant by him, he drew the logical conclusion, so to say, that she was an adulteress…True, as a husband, he was disturbed; but as a just man, he is not harsh. So great is the justice attributed to this man that he neither wished to have an adulteress in her, nor did he presume to punish her by exposing her.58

While Gracián indicates this view initially seemed to him to be very harsh, as it seemed to deny Joseph’s holiness and present him as merciful, but not as excelling in justice, he does state that this position is not overtly troubling or unreasonable.59 He draws attention to God’s allowing for holy men, such as the apostles Thomas and Peter, to fall for the benefit of the Church; in the same way, God allowed for Joseph’s presumption of Mary’s adultery so that the principal mystery of the Christian faith, the Incarnation, could be known to the world.60 Further, according to Gracián, Joseph did not sin in his judgement of Mary because he did not know the mystery of the Incarnation, and although he believed she had committed adultery he did not hold that it had been with her own consent.61 In Book III, these ideas are emblematically represented. Blancus’ depiction of Jesus resting his hands on the shoulders of Mary and Joseph symbolises his physical generation from Mary, but also his generation through Joseph’s decision to take Mary and her child into his home and thereby conceal the mysteries of the Incarnation and of Divine Redemption.

59 Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 82.
60 Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 82.
61 Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 82-3.
CHAPTER THREE

The *Summary*’s depiction of Joseph as confident in God’s guidance is comparable with artistic representations of Joseph as a just man, particularly Paolo Morando’s panel of St Joseph, completed around 1522 and housed in the Museo di Castelvecchio (Plate 3.7).62 The artist presents Joseph as a bust-length figure, grasping his flowering rod in his right hand while his left holds a compass above a book. The saint is identified through the text *S. Ioseph* included at his left. Carolyn C. Wilson interprets Morando’s representation of Joseph as closely corresponding with visual imagery of God the Father and with the characterisation established by Isolano of Joseph as a learned man.63 Joseph’s gaze beyond the image may suggest that he is lost in thought or deliberating on some matter; perhaps he is even weighing up obedience to the will of God, conceivably referenced by the flowering staff, with social order and tradition, perhaps conveyed through the compass.64 This interpretation finds reflection in Blancus’ illustration of Joseph looking upwards towards Jesus, suggesting that he is attentive to God’s will, and seeking guidance, while gesturing towards Mary, perhaps as an indication of his consideration of social custom and order. In both depictions, Joseph’s thoughtfulness and quality of deliberation is made paramount, ultimately serving to emphasise his confident trust in God’s guidance.

**Joseph’s charity**

Gracián also indicates that Joseph possesses great magnanimity, or charity. This is communicated clearly in Blancus’ engraving through Joseph’s relationship to Mary who is, as in the engraving accompanying Book II of the *Summary*, presented as the largest figure. Joseph turns his body to face hers and gestures towards her with his hand, emphasising a respect for and consideration of her. In return, Mary occupies a demure posture, and this, with her lowered eyes and clasped hands, perhaps indicates contemplation and submission to her husband and son standing above her. Joseph, by gesturing towards Mary, invites both Jesus and the spectator to consider her. This gesture also creates a visual communication of Gracián’s words that Joseph is himself, through his justice and the particular virtues of humility, charity, mercy and purity, the guardian of Mary who is the “heavenly paradise”.65

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64 The compass may also be taken to represent his role as archetype of God the Creator. See Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 61.
In his discussion of Joseph’s magnanimity, Gracián turns to the writings of Origen, who stressed that Joseph’s decision to leave Mary after discovering her pregnancy was because he knew he was outside this “mystery of greatest virtue”, deeming himself unworthy to be in her company, and thus expressing a deep humility and righteousness. In continuation of this argument, Gracián emphasises that Joseph, who knew his wife was pure and virtuous, and who knew the Spirit, decided to leave her not out of fear or doubt, but out of reverence and respect for her and for God. This perception seeks to emphasise Joseph’s charity and humility; he is motivated not by a desire for self-preservation, but by a deep respect for Mary’s dignity. The body language of Blancus’ Joseph communicates this powerfully. Joseph’s gesture towards Mary not only directs the eye to her, but also communicates an element of respect and esteem. Joseph is shown to clearly value Mary and recognise her virtue, and as the epigram states it is with her, “the just Virgin”, that he attains through Jesus “the lofty heights of justice”.

This once again stresses to the viewer the importance of devotion to Mary, as it is with her that one can achieve the virtue of justice, but also points to the importance of charity in family relationships. While Book II of the *Summary* strove to emphasise Joseph’s role as the authoritative head of the family unit, Book III depicts the mutuality of the Holy Family, with Mary and Joseph shown communicating and interacting with each other in mutual harmony to gain blessings from Christ. They are presented to families, and to spouses in particular, as a suitable model for intimate and mutual relationship which places God, not themselves, at the centre.

The focus of Joseph’s gaze and gesture away from the spectator and towards Jesus and Mary functions in accordance with the traditional visual depiction of Charity. In accordance with the other theological virtues, Charity is often rendered as female. She is frequently surrounded by young children and infants who cling to her or nurse at her breast. Unlike Fortitude, depictions of Charity tend to show her gaze focused not on the viewer but on the children she nurtures. This is well-demonstrated in Cecchino del Salviati’s *Charity* (Plate 3.8), completed between 1543 and 1545 and held in the Uffizi Gallery collection. The panel depicts a centralised kneeling woman dressed in elaborate robes and surrounded by three children, all of whom cling to her. Her arms loosely encircle the children beneath her, emphasising a quality of protectiveness, while her fixed gaze towards the smiling child at her right shoulder indicates...

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her role as a maternal provider. The external light source illuminates the figures directly, drawing the viewer’s attention to Charity’s face and to her right breast, which is exposed as though she has just been nursing the children, once more conveying her quality of nurturer. Like this Charity, Joseph in Blancus’ etching is occupied completely with those for whom he provides.

While visual representations of Joseph’s justice, though not particularly common, most often centre on his physical strength and power, there are artworks which do emphasise his virtues of charity and faithfulness to others. This is shown in Simone Martini’s unusual depiction of *Christ Returning to His Parents* (Plate 3.9), completed in 1342 and housed in the Walker Gallery in Liverpool. In a particularly powerful and emotive composition, Martini depicts Mary and Joseph’s encounter with Jesus after finding him in the Temple in Jerusalem. Through his detailed attention to gaze and gesture, the artist has visualised with striking realism the middle of a family quarrel. Mary’s low, seated position emphasises her humility as she looks and gestures towards Jesus, a book open on her lap. The boy Jesus and Joseph stand before her. Jesus’ stance and expression is one of very real defiance; his eyes are narrowed, his expression stern and his arms crossed, holding a closed book to his chest. Martini has represented Joseph here as somewhat of a “middle-man”; he stands between Mary and Jesus and looks down towards the boy, one hand on his shoulder, while gesturing towards Mary with the other. He is not shown admonishing the child, but tenderly reasoning with him to listen to his mother. Joseph’s centralised placement, as well as his gaze and gesture, communicates his stability, charity and virtue. Joseph’s placement at the scene’s apex casts him as the authoritative figure within the family unit, possessing the right to govern and direct Mary and Jesus in accordance with his roles as husband and father. Martini’s inclusion of a pyramidal structure conveys similarity with Blancus’ engraving, as in both instances the gaze and body language of the central figure leads the viewer’s eye to the figures at the edges of the frame.

Though Blancus’ Joseph is not the central figure, his gaze towards Jesus and gesture to Mary aid movement around the work as seen in Martini’s image. Blancus’ depiction of Joseph gazing

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69 This painting is not only unusual in the scene it depicts, and for Martini’s depth of portrayal of emotion, but also as it shows the Holy Family in isolation, rather than in the midst of the doctors of the Temple. For a discussion of this painting, see Don Denny, “Simone Martini’s The Holy Family”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 138-49.


72 In fact, Mary has the book open to an abbreviation of her words in Luke 2:48, “Son, why have you dealt with us thus?” See Christopher Kleinhenz’s *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, 2004: 690.
upwards at Jesus and speaking while gesturing to Mary indicates his faithfulness to her, a quality which is also seen in Martini’s visualisation of Joseph reasoning with Jesus. Martini’s Joseph places his hand on Jesus’ shoulder in a display of affection, reassurance and understanding. While the boy Jesus communicates strong emotional dominance in his closed body language and hostile expression, it is Joseph, through his central placement and occupation of the compositional apex, who holds power. Similarly, while Blancus’ Joseph is seated and does not occupy the compositional apex, his communication with Jesus and Mary through gesture and gaze shows his authority. In this way, both Martini and Blancus represent Joseph as conveying appropriate familial authority, as a father who is able to reason with his child, and as a model of charity and respect within the family unit.

Throughout Book III, Gracián aligns Joseph’s fortitude, confidence in God and magnanimity with perfect maleness. They equate to the highest virtue of justice, of which Joseph is the model. Gracián’s discussion of these attributes is unified in his concluding doctrine to the carpenters which concludes Book III. Following from the previous book in which he gave instruction as to how the brothers could make their hearts into “a worthy dwelling-place for the love of God”, he indicates that he will offer guidance on cultivating the love of one’s neighbour which, along with the love of God, forms justice, the “end of all virtues, the centre of the Spirit, and the foundation of all the Christian exercises.”73 Such love and charity, he writes, is essential in order to conduct works based on truth and to receive blessings.74 He consistently uses Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as models of inspiration for the brothers. For example, in his third point of doctrine, where he discusses the group’s meetings in their oratory, he encourages them to imagine that they have Jesus, Mary and Joseph among them. This, he writes, will help the brothers to visualise the “unity, respect, and peace” which they lived out, and to do likewise in their own dealings and way of life.75 This description of the Holy Family as existing in mutual communion with one another and as fostering the virtues of fortitude, confidence in God and magnanimity, all of which lead to justice, is clearly expressed in the harmony visualised in Blancus’ engraving and in its accompanying epigram.

73 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 187.
74 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 187.
75 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 188, 189.
The *Summary* continues with an exploration of Joseph’s role as “angelic man” or “angel on earth”. In the text of Book IV, Gracián successfully demonstrates how Joseph fulfils and even surpasses the offices of the nine choirs of angels, writing:

*Poiche quello i quale ci da licenza di poter chiamare Iddio uomo, e è soggetto ad un legnaiauolo, ci da animo ancora di chiamare questo uomo, falegname Angelo terrestre, ò vero uomo angelico.*

[The fact we are able to call God man, and subject to a woodworker, gives us courage yet to call this man, a carpenter, an angel on earth or in truth an angelic man.]\(^1\)

Blancus visualises this role in a depiction of the Holy Family’s return from Egypt (Plate 4), an event which, although not detailed in Scripture, has grown in significance as an iconographic subject.\(^2\) From the sixteenth century, iconography of the Holy Family included more prominent references to Joseph’s collaboration with the angels, with domestic scenes of the Holy Family showing angels, comparable in age to Jesus, assisting Joseph in his everyday tasks.\(^3\) The *Summary*’s interpretation of Joseph as an “angelic man” is distinctly expressed in Morale’s epigram, which bestows upon Joseph three titles, *atlante, dux,* and *custos* (Atlas, leader and guardian). Although these titles are not traditionally associated with the angels, they work in conjunction with Gracián’s text and Blancus’ engraving to communicate Joseph’s role as an “angel on earth”.

Taking these three titles as its main focus, this chapter will consider the relationship between Book IV’s text, epigram, and image, and will expose the connections this image holds with Scriptural accounts of the Holy Family’s return from Egypt and with writings of the Church Fathers and devotional authors on the subject. Although perhaps not as popular an artistic scene as the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt, depictions of Joseph, Mary and Jesus returning to Israel nonetheless provided the compositional formula for the “Two Trinities”, which show the Holy Family walking or posed in a landscape with God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the heavens. This chapter will consider, as part of its comparative analysis, particular links between Blancus’s etching and artworks depicting the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and their

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\(^{2}\) Bolger Foster, *The Iconography of St Joseph*, 1978: 175.

\(^{3}\) Barbagallo, *St Joseph in Art*, 2014: 73.
subsequent return to Israel. It will ultimately be demonstrated here that the text of Book IV, and its preceding image and epigram, work in an emblematic way to present Joseph as supporting Christ (Atlas), as a guide (Dux), and as a guardian (Custos), qualities which strongly unite him with the angels. This representation also casts Joseph as the champion of the Church Militant\textsuperscript{4} and as a role model for the brethren of the Archconfraternity.

Book IV of the Summary is preceded by an engraving of the Holy Family travelling. Mary is seated astride a donkey, while Joseph carries Jesus on his shoulders. The age and size of the boy Jesus, and the movement of the Holy Family from right to left, likely indicates that this is a depiction of the Holy Family’s return to Israel.\textsuperscript{5}

In accordance with his previous engravings, Blancus has composed this image in a pyramidal construction. Although the prior works have featured God the Father, Joseph and Jesus at the apex, in this instance Mary is placed at the top of the compositional pyramid. As in his previous portrayals of Mary, in this image she is veiled and dressed in flowing garments, with a nimbus symbolising her sanctity. From her position upon the donkey’s back she looks down at Joseph, which helps to draw the eye to Joseph and Jesus. Her gaze towards Joseph may be interpreted as one of submission and deference, yet the fact that she gestures forward and out of the image, perhaps to the route they will follow, indicates her leadership and directs visual focus to the background landscape and beyond the visual field. The donkey, which is laden with bags, turns its head to gaze directly at the viewer, and thus conceivably acts as a means by which the audience can participate in the scene. Its forward stride emphasises a sense of movement and draw the viewer’s eye to the rocky terrain at the base of the image which indicates the Holy Family’s humility and trials and indeed their arduous voyage.\textsuperscript{6} By the image’s left border, as if carved into the rock, the artist’s initials are found.

Joseph walks alongside the donkey, carrying the Child Jesus who, in a touching gesture, wipes sweat from Joseph’s brow. Behind Joseph and Jesus is a palm tree; its proximity to Joseph

\textsuperscript{4} The state of the Christian Church which embodies believers on earth who, as written in Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, struggle against sin, Satan, and all wickedness, darkness and evil (Eph 6:12). Tradition generally notes two other states: the Church Penitent, or those souls who are in purgatory, and the Church Triumphant, who have experienced the beatitic vision and entered into the company of the saints.

\textsuperscript{5} These scenes are usually identifiable through their portrayal of the Holy Family travelling from right to left, and of Jesus as a grown child often shown walking beside one or both of his parents or being led by the hand. An early visualisation of this scene is found in the Northern French or Flemish \textit{Biblia pauperum} (Plate 4.1), in which Joseph, who carries supplies over his shoulder, leads Jesus by the hand while behind them Mary follows on a donkey. Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 115.

reflects arguments made by Wilson and Chorpenning that the inclusion of palm trees in artistic
depictions of the Holy Family evokes a metaphorical link with the saint.\(^7\) Blancus presents
Joseph as visibly ageing, as compared to the previous three engravings his beard appears longer
and his face more shadowed. Despite this difference, however, Blancus still portrays him a
powerful and virile man. Joseph wears a simple tunic, the contours of which show his muscular
arms which firmly support Jesus upon his back and expose his solid calves. He also carries a
bag, from which a hammer protrudes. The depiction of Joseph carrying a bag, usually held at
the waist, is identified by Sandra de Arriba as a sign of the responsibilities he held for the
family’s finances as effectively the family breadwinner, or may allude to his role as *nutritor
Domini* or even refer to traditional Jewish iconography.\(^8\) Furthermore, the depiction of Joseph
carrying tools recalls the description offered by Gracián in Book II of the *Summary*, in which
he writes that Joseph accompanied Mary and Jesus on all journeys, carrying with him a saw on
his shoulders, an axe at his belt, a level, a compass, and a chisel in his pocket.\(^9\) He is also shown
speaking, perhaps to reassure Mary and Jesus or simply even to direct Mary on their journey.
The epigram accompanying the image reads *Athlas, dux, custos, gestat, regit, atque tuetur
Coelum humeris, matrem uoce, et utrumque fide* (“Atlas, leader, guardian carries, rules, and
protects Heaven (God) on his shoulders, His mother by his voice, and both by his faith”).
The basis for Blancus’ depiction of the Return of the Holy Family from Egypt is found in the
infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. These Scriptures detail that after Jesus’ birth, Joseph
is warned in a dream of Herod’s wish to kill Jesus, whom he perceives as a threat to his power.
Matthew’s Gospel reads:

> Now after they [the Magi] had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a
dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and
remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy
him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to
Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had
been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son”

\(^7\) Wilson references the 1622 sermon on St Joseph of Francis de Sales, who describes Joseph’s marriage with the
Virgin as strengthening her with “incorruptible wood” and allowing her to grow “like a glorious palm by the
side of its beloved palm tree.” See Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 95. For
specific discussion on the significance of the palm in iconography of Joseph, and particularly as expressed in
Francis de Sales’s writings, see Chorpenning, “Francis de Sales and the Emblematic Tradition: The Palm Tree
as an Allegory of St Joseph’s Virtues”, *Emblemata Sacra: The Rhetoric and Hermeneutics of Illustrated Sacred

\(^8\) Sandra de Arriba Cantero, “San José”, *Rivista Digital de Iconografia Medieval* 5 (10) 2013: 58.

Later, Matthew indicates that on Herod’s death Joseph is told to return to Israel, in accordance with prophecy.

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were sought the child’s life are dead.” And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazorean” (Matt 2: 19-23).

Joseph’s response to the angel’s command is the same in both instances. He offers no words in reply, yet great power and meaning is conveyed through what he chooses to do. The words of the angel correspond perfectly with the actions of Joseph. Matthew presents Joseph obeying without question, without saying a single word, without protesting that it is night, without stopping to think of having to leave his work and support network. He is presented as a man of action, yet also as obedient to and confident in the directives of God the Father, a quality which, as noted previously, makes him a “just man”.

**Joseph the Atlas**

Blancus’ depiction of a physically burdened Joseph, carrying Christ on his shoulders and his hammer on his belt, communicates his role as *Atlas*. This title evokes the mythical tale of the Titan Atlas who was forced to support the heavens on his shoulders. The visualisation of Joseph in this way corresponds with Gracián’s description of the Holy Family’s journeys, and particularly of their return from Egypt, during which Joseph led the donkey on which the Virgin sat with “greatest diligence”, while leading the Child Jesus by the hand:

> Non lo pativa però conoscendo che egli cominciasse a stancarsi, ma se lo poneva in spalla, fatto un divino Atlante, e cosi con travaglio grandissimo caminava, carico di colui...e cosi su chiamarò Christoforo...O chi potesse vederi glorioso santo andar carico di ferti dell’arte sua sudando, con il bambino sopra delle spalle, il quale andava asciugando il sudore del santo vecchiarello, e veder anco la gloriosa Vergine, e il medesimo bambino aggradir nei I cuori loro quelle fat che,

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10 It is important to note that while Matthew makes the claim that the Holy Family’s dwelling in Nazareth is a fulfilment of prophecy, nowhere in the Old Testament is there a direct reference to Nazareth. Several theories have been proposed, some of which centre on wordplay. Matthew may have sought to align “Nazorean” with “netzer”, or branch, which features in the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 11:1. Additionally, the title of “Nazorean” may call to mind “nazir” or “Nazarite” (one set apart or consecrated to God) which features in the stories of Joseph (Gen 49:26) and Samson (Jdg 13:7).


che sopportava per loro amore? E chi potrà mai contrapesar’i beni, che egli riceve poi por questo? Che altro é questo a dunque, se non far’ officio d’Angelo custode, portando nelle sua braccia Gesù acciò non inciampassè e percuotesse il piede in alcuna pietra?

Chi su sua guardia? Chi lo portò quando andò in Egitto, e quando tornò, e quando da Nazareth andavano al tempio in Jerusalemme...e nella strada di Jerusalemme, ne quella dell’Egitto, è tutta ageuole, e piana, ma in ciascuna di esse sono passi pericolosi, e cattivissimi, altri per esser pietrosi, altri sangosi, altri finalmente per fossi, fiumi e torrenti.

[When Joseph saw that Jesus was tired, he would carry Him on his shoulders, making him a divine Atlas, and so with great travail he carried him...so he can be called “Christophorus”, “Christ-bearer”. ... Who saw Joseph sweating, loaded with the tools of his trade and on his shoulders the Child, who would wipe the sweat from the saint’s brow, and the Virgin and God Himself thanking Joseph in their hearts for the labour that he undertook for them? And who can ponder the graces that on this account Joseph received? What else is all this but the ministry of Guardian Angel: Joseph carrying Jesus in his arms so that He does not stumble or hurt His foot on a stone?]^{13}

If this were not so [if Joseph is not Jesus’ guardian angel], who was his guardian? Who carried him when they went to Egypt, and when they returned, and when from Nazareth they went to the temple in Jerusalem? And neither the road to Jerusalem nor the road to Egypt was smooth or flat, but on each they did pass dangers, troublemakers, rough terrain, rocky ground, ditches, holes and streams.]^{14}

These words echo the description Gracián gives in Book I, where he writes that in carrying Jesus in his arms, Joseph receives great blessings.

*E, quando il nostro Giosèf arrivasse anch’egli nell’Egitto con il suo bambino nelle braccia, il Cielo si apirebbe di modo, come se fosse tutto divenuto, una finestra, meravigliandosi gl’Angeli, e quasi restando stupefatti e attoniti, vedendo con tanta humilità il lor Iddio, e Creatore nelle braccia d’un povero legnaiuolo, e conoscendo merito si grande in una creatura.*

[When St Joseph would enter a place with the Christ Child in his arms, all heaven would become a window, with the angels in awe at God being carried in the arms of a carpenter and at such great humility on the part of the Creator and so great a favour bestowed upon a creature!]^{15}

In the *Summary*, Gracián makes a direct comparison between Joseph’s labours as *Atlas* and the offices of the angelic choirs of the Thrones, Virtues and Seraphim. The Thrones are described

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by Gracián as “the chairs and seats where God reposes, the tribunals where God is seated to judge, chairs whence God teaches the world”. The Summary explicitly refers to Joseph as exercising the ministry of the Thrones, as “countless times he had seated in his arms, on his shoulders, in his lap and on his knees God Himself as a young child, to whom, according to the Prophet Daniel, the Ancient One, who is the Eternal Father, gave power, glory, and everlasting dominion to judge the living and the dead (Dan 7:14).” In its depiction of Jesus seated on the shoulders of Joseph, Blancus’ engraving presents the saint as an earthly Throne for the Son of God.

Through his role as Atlas, Joseph is shown to minister to Jesus in a way which matches, and even surpasses, the angelic office of Virtues. Gracián describes the Virtues as “the ministers of supernatural occurrences”, and indicates that Joseph, who ministered to the greatest miracle of the childhood, rearing and life of Jesus, can be seen to exercise the same role. The Summary’s description of Joseph carrying the tired Child Jesus on his shoulders, coupled with Blancus’ depiction of the scene, casts Joseph as the minister to Jesus and thus sharing in the role of the Virtues.

As a “divine Atlas”, Joseph also communicates the ministry of the Seraphim. Gracián describes the role of the Seraphim as to “reveal the infinite goodness of God and love Him without ever ceasing this divine act of charity.” Blancus clearly conveys Joseph’s charity, as even though he is tired and burdened by the bags he carries, he still supports and cares for Jesus. This visualisation reflects Gracián’s description of the care, affection and comfort Joseph offered to Jesus through his role as father and in his fulfilment of the angelic office of the Seraphim.

Although the title of Atlas is used only once by Gracián to describe Joseph it grew in popularity among Golden-Age Spanish authors. A prominent example is found in the first “Christmas Ballad” of Sor Marcela de San Félix, a Trinitarian nun, who gives explicit reference to Joseph’s chastity and divine fatherhood in the words: divino Atlante / pues puede sustentar / dos cielos

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17 ...poi che innumerevoli volte l’istesso Dio mentre su di erá tenera, e fanciullesca stette assentato ora sopra delle sua braccia, ora sopra delle spalle, or nel grembo, e hor sopra le ginocchia, al quale come dice Daniela Profeta (il vecchio di giorni), che é il Padre eterno (diede potere, e virtú, e regno) per giudicar’ i vivi e I morti. Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 208. English translation taken from Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 195.


19 ...Virtudi, che cosi si chiamano quell Angioli, che sono ministri delle opere sopranaturali. Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 208.

20 Chorpenning, Just Man, 1993: 196.
los más grandes (“the divine giant Atlas / he can support on his shoulders / two heavens so great”). 21 While an unusual artistic subject, representations of Joseph as “the new Atlas” who carries Christ on his shoulders were not completely unfamiliar. Such representations, according to Erika Langmuir, may have been indirectly influenced by scenes of familial intimacy depicted on Roman sarcophagi. She draws particular attention to the life-cycle sarcophagus (Plate 4.2.) dedicated to Marcus Cornelius Statius, and possibly from Ostia, which depicts on its front panel the father carrying his son on his shoulder, gazing at the child and holding him securely in his arms. 22 Such a depiction presents a scene of paternal affection, with the father’s carrying of his son on his shoulders emphasising his role as protector and supporter of his children.

It is thus clear that for Joseph to truly be titled as Atlas, he must possess physical strength and virility. Both are conveyed by Blancus in his depiction of Joseph’s strong physique and in Gracián’s description of Joseph’s ability to carry the boy Jesus for long distances, allowing the Child to rest on his shoulders. While Gracián emphasises the great joy that carrying God in his arms and on his shoulders would have brought to Joseph, he also details the sufferings Joseph experienced, caused by the trials, dangers, and burdens he experiences as he guides, governs, and protects his family. This dichotomy of sorrow and joy communicates the essence of the fourth chapter of Book IV, in which Gracián writes:

_E perch’è so, che i devote di San Giosef sono per ordinario soliti di esser soggetti ad afflizioni, e travagli, e anco di riuscire con vittoria, per conseguenza avranno caro, che io gli discuopra, e dichiari alcuno de’travagli interiori, e però in questo capitolo voglio trattare di’essi, e anco degli esteriori sopportati di san Giosef, e della patienza, e longanimità, con che gli soffcì._

Because I know that St Joseph’s devotees are often afflicted and burdened with an abundance of troubles, that suffering abounds in the world, and that all will thank me if I explain something about St Joseph’s interior trials, I want to discuss both his interior and exterior trials and the patience and forbearance with which he endured them… 23

Blancus clearly visualises Joseph, the divine Atlas, in the midst of trial. He is visibly burdened and sweating, his downturned head and lowered eyes further emphasising his weariness and labour. Although he is struggling, he does not pause but moves forward as the Atlas who is

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determined to carry and protect the charges entrusted into his care by God. In return, both Jesus and Mary are shown to clearly recognise Joseph’s labours. On his shoulders, the boy Jesus wipes the sweat from Joseph’s brow in a gesture of affection and consolation, while Mary, who is seated on the donkey, looks back to Joseph perhaps in an expression of encouragement.

The Summary’s representation of Joseph as Atlas bore relevance for the Early Modern family. Joseph offers to the audience, and particularly to men, a model for respecting and successfully fulfilling the needs of family members, even in times of great trial and burden. As the wise, dedicated head of the Holy Family, Joseph had thus become an even greater model for the working men of the Archconfraternity who, as heads of their households, would quite possibly have been facing a very real threat of poverty. For these men, the confraternity offered both religious and social protection. While wages increased in the 1590s, with a 10.5 percent increase for a carpenter, or falegname, the price index rose 79 percent and food prices had risen drastically. These circumstances placed respectable and hardworking families on the brink of destitution, while the poor faced disaster and death. Although membership of the confraternity would have offered the brethren some security, we cannot assume that this made them immune from social and economic pressures. The Joseph of the Summary, who endures his trials with patience and confidence, therefore becomes a tangible and relatable inspiration and intercessor in times of need.

The Summary’s depiction of the Holy Family as a family experiencing hardship would have conceivably been a relatable image for the contemporary Roman family, who largely found themselves isolated and harassed by social upheaval, invasion, plague and famine. While the sack of Rome in 1527 was perhaps part of the distant past, it marked a key transition in the political and social climates, and in the institution of the papacy. War and invasion, particularly by the French and Spanish powers, was a real threat. The struggle of the papacy to maintain power during the Reformation was likely not an issue for families, yet the tense climate of the Reformation would certainly have been worrying. Plagues, which were recurrent throughout Italy until 1630, caused generalised anxiety. Famine and social hardship, such as

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27 Most of the cities of northern Italy saw an end to the plague pandemic in the 1630s. J. N. Hays, Epidemics and Pandemics: Their Impacts on Human History (California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2004): 105.
being unlawfully imprisoned or intimidated by authorities, would have been a concern for the lower rung of society and may indeed have impacted the members of the Archconfraternity. By depicting the Holy Family as surviving in hostile times and in an unpredictable environment, the Summary presents them as a model for familial and social behaviour, a symbol of hope and a promise of help.\textsuperscript{28}

Francisco Pacheco, in his \textit{Art of Painting}, writes that on the Holy Family’s return from Egypt Joseph would occasionally walk with the Christ Child, holding his hand, or at other times would carry him in his arms.\textsuperscript{29} Such depictions, though more prevalent after Pacheco’s writing, deviate from the traditional representation of Mary carrying Jesus in her arms.\textsuperscript{30} Gertrud Schiller, in her landmark study on Christian iconography, describes such scenes as “exceptions…unimportant as far as the sense of the image is concerned”.\textsuperscript{31}

Chorpenning challenges this view with the statement that while such representations are exceptions, “they give a prominence to St Joseph that is uncommon at this period”.\textsuperscript{32} He also emphasises a distinction between paintings which show Joseph carrying Jesus on his shoulders and those which show Jesus being led by the hand. Byzantine depictions of the Holy Family’s journey into Egypt and return to Israel are more notable in their featuring of Joseph carrying Jesus on his back. For example, the Cappella Palatina of the Norman Palace in Palermo features a twelfth-century mosaic depiction of the Flight into Egypt (Plate 4.3).\textsuperscript{33} Joseph is depicted as leading the group, carrying Christ firmly on his shoulders. His head is tilted forward, his back hunched under his burden as he strides forward purposefully. Mary sits\textsuperscript{34} astride a donkey and a youth follows behind. Similarities can be noted between this mosaic and Blancus’ engraving. Joseph holds Jesus securely on his shoulders, his gaze fixed ahead. The charming inclusion, at the base of the image, of a river full of fish represents the varied and rough terrain over which the Family travels.

\textsuperscript{29} Chorpenning, \textit{Just Man}, 1993: 55.
\textsuperscript{34} Mary’s direct gaze upon the viewer, and her frontal position seated upon the donkey calls to mind regal imagery; it is almost as if she is seated upon a throne. This can perhaps be viewed as a reference to the \textit{Marial/Ecclesia} typology.
The *Summary*’s characterisation of Joseph as *Atlas* is contemporaneous with El Greco’s *St Joseph and the Christ Child* (Plate 4.4) which was commissioned in 1597 for the main altar of the Chapel of St Joseph in Toledo.\(^{35}\) Similar to Blancus’ depiction, El Greco conveys a virile Joseph. He is beardless and youthful. The artist’s use of dramatic chiaroscuro, especially to highlight the rippling folds of Joseph’s garments, display his muscular physique and strong, powerful limbs. *Putti* are depicted above Joseph and Jesus, bearing two floral garlands in their outstretched hands. As in the *Summary*, this representation works to communicate Joseph’s partnership with the angels.

Artists depicting Joseph carrying Jesus over rough terrain at times chose to connect him with St Christopher, thus visualising his title as “Christophorus”. In 1515, Giovanni Antonio De’Sacchi, commonly known as Pordenone, completed his *Mater Misericordiae with Saints Joseph and Christopher* (Plate 4.5), which was commissioned by Giovanni Francesco da Tiezzo, called Carneblutto, for the Cathedral of San Marco in Pordenone, where it remains.\(^{36}\) It shows the Virgin standing between the two saints and donors kneeling at her feet. Both Saints Christopher and Joseph hold Christ. Christopher looks up to Christ, who sits upon his shoulder, while Joseph holds the twisting infant in his arms. Worthy of note is Joseph’s gaze and expression: the only figure within the composition to look at the spectator, he greets the viewer with a protective gaze, and thus acts as a clear means by which audiences can enter the scene. By the time of Gracián’s writing, the cult of St Christopher had dwindled significantly due to a lack of evidence for the saint’s existence, and in describing Joseph as the “new Atlas”, the new bearer of heaven, Gracián establishes him as a suitable replacement for Christopher.\(^{37}\)

The representation of a virile Joseph able to support and defend his family as a “divine Atlas” marks a break from medieval tradition in that it presents one of the first glorifications of the saint in art. Wilson writes that Joseph’s artistic veneration is the unquestionable result of Pope Gregory XV’s promulgation of Joseph’s feast in 1621, but prior to this time the glorification of the saint was likely strengthened by Sixtus IV’s incorporation of Joseph’s feast into the Roman calendar and by the proceedings of the Council of Trent.\(^{38}\) The Council, in its decree

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\(^{37}\) Humanist scholars and Christian reformers alike had strongly criticised the veneration of Christopher due to the lack of historical evidence regarding his life. See Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l’art chrétien*, 3rd vol (Millwood: Kraus Reprint, 1988); part 1, 307; Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2001: 117.

\(^{38}\) Carolyn C. Wilson, “St Joseph as Mary’s Champion: Examining the Distinctive Connection between the *Madonna del Giglio*, the *Compagnia di San Giuseppe*, and the Church of San Giuseppe in Florence”, *Joseph of*
on sacred images, stressed that the saints enjoy eternal glory in heaven and are to be invoked by the faithful, even in requesting individual prayer.\(^{39}\) The Council urged that images of the saints be given due honour “because through the saints the miracles of God and salutary examples are set before the eyes of the faithful”.\(^{40}\) Such developments appear to have encouraged particular developments in the cults of Joseph and of the Holy Family.\(^{41}\) Almost twenty years prior to the depictions of Joseph by El Greco and in the *Summary*, the Flemish theologian Johannus Molanus cast Joseph as a man of youth and strength, and by the time El Greco’s painting was commissioned and the *Summary* was written this concept of the saint had gained momentum, particularly in Spanish and Mexican Colonial art.\(^{42}\) Further, and perhaps most importantly, the Council’s emphasis on the intercessory power of the saints, who offer examples of imitation for the faithful, may act in some way as a basis for the developing characterisation of Joseph as patron of the Church Militant.

The *Summary* presents Joseph the Atlas not only as the protector of his family, but also, in accordance with Gerson’s argument, as a “shield against adversity”, someone who could, through his intercessory power and patronage, protect the faithful from physical, spiritual and social calamity.\(^{43}\) Joseph’s weaknesses and trials are thus seen to become strengths and a strong focus of his protection. His difficulties arguably made him relevant to the Church Militant. Particularly in this post-Reformation period, during which the Christian Church as a whole was undergoing stages of redefinition, the identification of an intercessor and protector in Joseph would likely have offered the faithful a stronghold of reassurance and comfort.

The representation of Joseph as patron of the Church Militant is also conveyed in Isidoro Isolano’s *Summa de donis Sancti Joseph*. The *Summa* includes almost prophetic statements on the future glory and veneration of the saint, offering a notable characterisation of Joseph as

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\(^{40}\) *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, 1978: 216.


\(^{42}\) Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 115. It could be argued that this view of Joseph directly impacted Gracián, himself a Spaniard.

champion of the Church Militant.\textsuperscript{44} This characterisation is reflective of the increase in devotion to Joseph, through the particular efforts of the Franciscan order, of the Dominicans, who began to observe the feast of Joseph between 1508 and 1517, and of the Society of Jesus, which on its foundation in 1534 made veneration of Joseph almost “an inborn characteristic” and presented the Holy Family as an exemplar of paternal authority and filial piety.\textsuperscript{45}

Isidoro Isolano’s presentation of Joseph as protector of the Church was also likely influenced by his social context. During the seven-year period in which Isolano wrote his work (1514-21), the Italian peninsula was in the grips of war, as the French, Spanish, and the Holy Roman Emperor struggled for control over independent Italian states.\textsuperscript{46} Further, Isolano’s own writing was interrupted by his efforts to address the great theological and doctrinal challenge and crisis resulting from the posting of Martin Luther’s theses of reform in 1517.\textsuperscript{47}

With great concern for the spread of heresy, corruption and the horrors of war and natural disaster, Isolano expresses “that peace may be restored to Italy through most holy prayers to St Joseph”, “divine (or “godly”) Joseph”, “the lofty Spouse of the Queen of Heaven”, the head and patron of the Church Militant, and a stronghold against heresy.\textsuperscript{48} These impassioned words acknowledge the immediate situation of distress which was present in northern and central Italy at the time, but perhaps even more significantly, they present Joseph as the one to free Italy from its suffering, just as he guides, governs and protects the Holy Family in Gracián’s \textit{Summary}.

This representation of Joseph, \textit{Atlas} and defender of the Church, operates in harmony with the parallel established between the Virgin Mary and \textit{Ecclesia}, the abstract personification of the Church.\textsuperscript{49} This personification is seen to have Scriptural basis, with the regal and bridal imagery contained in Psalm 45 viewed as the foundation of this typology. The Mary/\textit{Ecclesia} model also extended to art, with artists choosing to present her in sumptuous regal garments, and at times a crown and bejewelled robes.\textsuperscript{50} While \textit{Ecclesia} is often united with Christ in

\textsuperscript{49} Wilson, \textit{St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art}, 2001: 5.
\textsuperscript{50} Timothy Verdon & Filippo Rossi, \textit{Mary in Western Art} (Vermont: Hadson Hills Press, 2005): 35.
visual narratives, such as in the apse mosaic in Santa Maria in Trastevere, it is not unreasonable to align her with Joseph, patron of the Church who, as shown in the Summary, defends the Virgin – and thus Ecclesia – from a variety of dangers.  

**Joseph as dux**

Building on the title of Atlas, Blancus’ depiction aligns Joseph to the epigram’s title of dux, or leader, who “rules” the Virgin by his voice. This title is linked with Gracián’s text, where Joseph is paralleled with the Archangels, Principalities, and Dominions. Gracián indicates that the role of the Archangels is to convey divine responses and messages, and draws particular attention to Gabriel, Raphael, Michael and Uriel, who were all sent on behalf of God to important individuals. He notes that Joseph, in giving messages to Mary and Jesus on God’s behalf, and in warning the Magi that they should not return to Herod (Matt 2:12), directly exercises this office. Blancus’ depiction of Joseph with mouth open in the act of speaking is thus given greater importance. When read in connection with the office of the Archangels it is clear that in this moment, Joseph is communicating a divine message to Mary and Jesus.

Gracián identifies Principalities as the angels who guide and govern. He states that this office is fulfilled in Joseph in that Jesus, who is “the angel” or “the messenger” of the covenant (Malachi 3:1), and Mary, the queen of the angels, are both subject to him. Again, Blancus’ depiction of Joseph speaking conveys this office. Although Joseph is physically burdened and struggling, he is by no means portrayed as an ineffective or incapable leader. His determined stride and strong physique communicate this, but his action of speaking is perhaps an even more powerful communication of his role as dux. Joseph may be weary, but he is still able to exercise the authority befitting him as head of the family and is still able to offer to Mary and Jesus guidance and reassurance through his words. As a response to this Blancus depicts Mary

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51 A particularly relevant example is found in the apse mosaic in Santa Maria in Trastevere, where we find an enthroned Christ embracing a crowned woman, who hold a scroll bearing a passage from the Song of Songs (2:6). This woman is identified as Ecclesia by virtue of the fact that she is holding this scroll, yet at the same time she is readily identified as Mary through the scroll Christ holds, which contain the words with which he greets Mary as she is assumed into heaven in de Voragine’s *Golden Legend*: “Come, my chosen one, and I shall put you on my throne”.

52 Gabriel was sent to the Virgin (Luke 1:26), Raphael to Tobias (Tob 5:4-22), Michael to Daniel (Dan 10:21) and Uriel to Esdra (2 Esd 4:1).


54 *Christo Gesù (Angelo nel Testamento), e la Vergine Maria Regina e Imperatrice de gli Angeli, e il governare, e il commandar ’a queste due persone su comesso a Giosèf*. Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 158.
and Jesus both focusing their attention on Joseph, which further indicates their acceptance of his authority and leadership.

Continuing in his description of the Dominions, Gracián stresses that God and the Queen of Heaven both willingly submitted and were obedient to Joseph.\textsuperscript{55} Although Mary is placed at the apex of Blancus’ composition, and gestures forward perhaps authoritatively, her gaze back to Joseph indicates submission and deference. It is important to note that her gaze and expression is calm which, coupled with the representation of Joseph speaking, further emphasises his role as \textit{dux}. Joseph is here shown able to safely lead and guide his family in a manner reflective of and even surpassing that of the angels.

Joseph’s role as \textit{dux} has a Scriptural basis. His unquestioning fulfilment of the angel’s command (Matt 2:13-15) is indicative of his fulfilment of this role. He is charged to guide and govern Mary and Jesus, who are in turn subject to him.\textsuperscript{56} It also demonstrates his quality of justice which, as described in the previous chapter, Gracián identified as indicative of the deep virtue which inspires Joseph to seek the protection and wellbeing of Mary and Jesus at all costs.\textsuperscript{57} The revelation of an angelic message to Joseph rather than to Mary ostensibly indicates his authoritative role as leader within the family unit, and Mary’s apparent submission to Joseph’s instruction illustrates that she recognises and accepts this authority. The revelation of this divine message to Joseph also indicates the special relationship he holds with God.

\textbf{Joseph’s role as \textit{custos}}

Blancus’ depiction of Joseph striding forward in determination over rocky ground communicates visually the epigram’s title of \textit{custos}, or “guardian”. Joseph is the guardian who protects Mary and Jesus by his faith, a faith which is clearly demonstrated in Scripture and by his communication with God. As noted, Joseph’s actions of taking the child and his mother out of Israel in the night, and again in returning to Israel when the threat of Herod’s wrath had passed, directly parallel the angel’s commands. He acts with complete trust in and dependence

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\textsuperscript{55} Gracián, \textit{Sumario}, 1597: 158.
\textsuperscript{56} Bernard of Clairvaux writes that to Joseph was given “not only to see and to hear what many kings and prophets had longed to see and did not see, to hear and did not hear, but even to carry Him, to take Him by the hand, to hug and kiss Him, to feed Him and to keep Him safe.” Further, Jean Gerson describes Joseph as Mary’s “witness and guardian”, and marvels that “he who carved out the dawn and the soul was subject to a carpenter”. For Bernard, see \textit{In laudibus Virginis Matris}, II.16 (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1966): 34. For Gerson, see \textit{Jean Gerson, Euvres completes}, 8:61, ed. Palemon Glorieux (Paris: Desclée, 1960-73). English translation for both taken from McGuire, “Becoming a Father and a Husband”, 2011: 52, 54.
\textsuperscript{57} McGuire, “Becoming a Father and a Husband”, 2011: 50.
on God, and it is through this dependence and faith, and in his co-operation with the angel, that Jesus and Mary are kept safe.

Gracián aligns Joseph’s role as custos, or guardian, with the offices of the Angels, the lowest choir, and the Cherubim. In his description, Gracián indicates the Angels are the “custodians and guardians of humankind”, and that Joseph, in his protection of Jesus and Mary, clearly exercises this role. With regards to the Cherubim, to whom are revealed “the ineffable secrets of eternal wisdom”, Gracián draws a parallel with Joseph in his emphasis that the mysteries of the Incarnation were revealed to him and that he received, from the mouth of Jesus, secrets which many of the angels did not know.

Joseph is therefore presented as both protector of Mary and Jesus and as protector of the divine Mystery, further emphasising his role as champion of the Church Militant. The previous chapter considered the Holy Family as the nascent Church, noting the description of Jesus as the “cornerstone” of the Church, resting upon the foundations of Mary (Ecclesia) and Joseph. Several Franciscan writers, including Peter John Olivi, Ubertine of Casale and Bartholomew, emphasise Joseph’s protection of the Church through his role as guardian both of Mary and of the Christian faithful. This is indicated in the words of Peter John Olivi, who writes in his Postilla super Matthaeum that:

Joseph represents God the Father or Christ because he is the spouse of the Church; he is also the type of the bishops, spouses of the Church...And in the Christian religion which, like Mary, conceived the evangelical Word through the spirit of Christ, Joseph is also the image of the Roman pontiffs, instilled as guardians of the Church.

Joseph’s protective role is given Scriptural basis in Matthew’s emphasis that both the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt and their return to Israel work as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. In his conclusion to the account of the Holy Family’s flight into Egypt, Matthew writes:

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58 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 205.
60 The Holy Family, in this light, is cast as the origin of the Church.
This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son” (Matt 2:15).

The flight of the Holy Family calls to mind three Old Testament “flights” which prefigure the flight of Jesus from Herod: Jacob’s flight from Esau (Gen 27:42-45); the Midianites’ selling of Joseph to Potiphar, counsellor to Pharaoh and commander of the Egyptian guard (Gen 37:36); and David’s escape from Saul (1 Sam 19:11-12).63 These precedents substantiate Joseph’s role as guardian. Just as Israel had brought about the ancient covenant through exodus from its “state of slavery”, so too Joseph, whom Barbagallo describes as the “repository of and collaborator with the providential mystery of God”, guards even in exile him who brings the new covenant into being.64 Joseph protects and fosters his family, the origin of the Church, and also offers protection to the body of believers to whom the new covenant has been revealed.

It is clear that Joseph’s guardianship of Jesus and Mary is only successful through his obedience to and trust in God. The subject of Joseph’s obedient and faithful guardianship features particularly in the writing of St John Chrysostom. In his eighth homily on the Gospel of Matthew, he writes:

Joseph, when he heard these things, was not offended, neither did he say, “This thing is hard to understand. Didst thou not say just now, that He should save His people? And now He saves not even Himself: but we must fly, and go far from home, and be a long time away: the facts are contrary to the promise.” Nay, none of these things doth He say, (for the man was faithful) neither is he curious about the time of his return; and this though the angel had put it indefinitely thus: Be thou there until I tell thee. But nevertheless, not even at this did He shudder, but submits and obeys, undergoing all the trials with joy.65

Further, Chrysostom expresses the obedience of Joseph to the will of God even in the midst of trial:

And this because God, who is full of love to man, did with these hardships mingle things pleasant also; which indeed is His way with regard to all the saints, making neither their dangers nor their refreshments continual, but weaving the life of all righteous men, out of both the one and the other. This very thing He did here also.66

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64 This theme of going to Egypt in order to achieve salvation again parallels the story of Joseph of Egypt, who saves Israel. Barbagallo, *St Joseph in Art*, 2014: 61.
Additionally, in the Scriptural account of the Holy Family’s return to Israel and eventual settlement in Nazareth, the life of Jesus is conducted according to the designs which are made manifest through the words of the angels to Joseph; therefore, Joseph’s roles as father and husband were significant, as through them he ensured the protection of mother and child.\(^67\)

The image of Joseph as custos, or as a protector and guide in times of suffering, was significantly developed by Isidoro Isolano in his *Summa de Donis Sancti Ioseph*. Isolano completed his work in 1521, and in the following year dedicated it to the newly installed Pope Hadrian VI.\(^68\) In his address to the Holy Father, Isolano describes the extent of Italy’s suffering; it is a nation which is shaken by the turbulence of faction and flooded with the blood of the faithful, which weeps for its exiled citizens, moans at the sight of despoiled monastic houses, and is afflicted by the sight of clerics forced to beg.\(^69\) Isolano, who describes himself as “an earthworm” and “not a man”, writes that he offers at the foot of the papal throne his *Summa*, which contains the merits of him who was privileged to bear the name of “father of God.”\(^70\) Joseph is presented, in the *Summa*, as a powerful intercessor for and patron of the struggling Italy. Isolano urges Hadrian, by the faith of Abraham, by the direction of Moses, by the anointing of David, and by Peter’s authority, to decree that the Church hold an annual feast in honour of Joseph which is solemn, joyful, and celebrated with proper observance, deep respect, and apostolic veneration.\(^71\) Isolano’s desire for a universal, annual Josephine feast was eventually fulfilled in 1621.\(^72\)

The characterisation of Joseph the custos is seen in Giovanni Battista Paggi’s altarpiece of the Holy Family’s return from Egypt, completed ca. 1586 for the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Florence (Plate 4.6.). Mary and the child Jesus walk hand-in-hand down a sloping hill, bathed in light, while behind them Joseph carries a haversack. He is surrounded by angels and putti; one gestures forward, indicating guidance, while another leads the donkey. While Joseph is here relegated to the background of the composition, he is still afforded the qualities

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\(^70\) Isidoro Isolano, *Summa*, vol. 1, 1861: 4.
\(^72\) Wilson, “St Joseph as Custos”, 2002: 91. Wilson notes here that Isolano’s appeal to the Pope “richly merits attention”, with consideration first of its immediate context (political and social), and second, in regard to the status of St Joseph as already established in central and northern Italy.
of guardian and protector through his forward movement, physical labour, and close interaction with the angels which, perhaps, communicates his virtue as “angelic man”.

Also salient is Caravaggio’s Rest on the Flight into Egypt (Plate 4.7.), which was painted in 1594 and is housed in the Galleria Doria Pamphili in Rome.\(^{73}\) This work shows the Holy Family set against a landscape. Mary sleeps, with the infant Jesus in her arms, while on the left of the composition Joseph, who is seated, holds a book of music from which an angel plays. Caravaggio has retained the depiction of Joseph as elderly, and the representation of the saint has been termed by Howard Hibbard as “simple”, particularly through his unshod feet and the juxtaposition of his head with that of the donkey.\(^{74}\) It is, however, important to note that here, as with Galle’s engraving, Joseph is not a mere observer of the scene, or distanced from Mary and Jesus. Rather, he is an integral element of the composition, with the depiction of his cooperation with the angel, particularly in the playing of music, again conveying his virtue as an “angelic man” and emphasising his cooperation and harmony with the divine.

Gracián’s concluding doctrine to the Archconfraternity is centred on the brethren’s protection of their chastity and honesty. The author begins by presenting the Holy Family as unified by the virtues of chastity, virginity, and purity, and stresses the importance of cultivating these virtues with “every care and diligence” among the brethren.\(^{75}\) He urges the brethren particularly to live in the image and spirit of the Virgin Mary who, like them, had been entrusted into the protection of Joseph, whom the epigram describes as her guardian by voice and by faith. Furthermore, Gracián writes that in times of temptation, the brethren should invoke with their lips and on their hearts the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, asking for their help in trial and believing without any doubt that the temptation will cease and they will soon reach “a state of perfect peace, and tranquillity, with greatest profit.”\(^{76}\) This particular point of Gracián’s doctrine to the brethren bears a close link with the Book’s accompanying engraving and epigram, which shows Joseph himself experiencing trial, laden with tools and bearing Jesus on

\(^{75}\) Poi che dunque in questa compagnia di questa tre il tutto è castità, verginità, e purità, nella vostra compagnia di san Giovsef è necessario che queste cose con ogni cura, e diligenza, sieno tra i fratelli. Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 279.
\(^{76}\) …e con la perseveranza in questa invocazione arrivate ad un perfetissimo stato di pace, e tranquillità, con profitto grandissimo. Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 280.
his back, yet still carrying within himself the joy of guiding the Madonna and Child to their home in Israel.

Gracián’s text cooperates harmoniously with Blancus’ engraving and with the epigram in presenting Joseph as a relatable figure worthy of emulation by the brethren of the Archconfraternity. Gracián emphasises that while Joseph experienced great joys as husband of Mary and father of Jesus, he also experienced significant trial and tribulation, and this co-existence of joy and sorrow is depicted visually by Blancus. Furthermore, the representation of Joseph as perfectly fulfilling within himself the offices of the choirs of angels, and thus identifiable as an “angelic man”, emphasises the greatness of his paternal responsibility and offers him as a suitable patron and intercessor for the Summary’s audience. This representation of the saint casts him as a figure with whom the brethren, some of whom would themselves have been married or heads of households, could identify. In depicting the saint in this way, the Summary ultimately works to stress that the Holy Family itself experienced the sufferings and trials of an ordinary family and presents them as a model of action, faith and perseverance for the Archconfraternity.
CHAPTER FIVE: PATRON OF THE INTERIOR LIFE

Book V of the Summary discusses Joseph’s attainment of contemplation, as well as his death and privileges. The engraving preceding this Book (Plate 5) presents a representation of the Holy House of Nazareth, an artistic genre which rose to prominence during the post-Tridentine period and in conjunction with developments in the cult of the Holy House of Loreto.¹ Father Chorpenning notes that this cult is intertwined with the history of the Carmelite order. He writes that the Carmelites fled the Saracen-invaded Palestine in 1291, the same year in which, according to tradition, the Holy House was miraculously transported to Italy; that one of the first chronicles published on the Holy House (1480) was written by Battista Spagnoli, vicar general of the Mantuan Congregation of the Carmelites; and that in 1489, the Carmelites became the first religious order to be granted complete custody of the Holy House of Loreto.² The Holy House of Loreto clearly had deep importance for the Carmelite order. Such importance is openly reflected in Gracián’s Summary, particularly in the emphasis placed on the Holy Family’s domestic life, and indeed in Blancus’ engraving, which sets the Holy Family in a private and homely interior space. The warmth and intimacy conveyed through Blancus’ detailed description indicates the scene had a particular importance to the text. Through his choice to depict the Holy Family at home, Blancus conveys a palpable familial intimacy and tenderness which is, as has been emphasised so far, a consistent theme throughout the Summary. This chapter will explore this theme of familial affection, and will also discuss Book V’s emblematic representation of Joseph as exercising within himself a perfect balance of action and contemplation.

In the foreground of the scene, the curly-haired boy Jesus, dressed in a simple tunic and sandals, helps Mary prepare to cook a fish, while a pet dog is begging at Jesus’ feet. In accordance with Blancus’ previous depictions and with traditional iconography, Mary is veiled and wears a long dress and mantle. Joseph, who is bearded and wears a tunic and cloak, sleeps in the background while an angel speaks into his ear. This gesture of Joseph resting his left elbow on the table, ¹ Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 118. The Holy House of Loreto is, according to tradition, the site where Mary lived, where the Annunciation occurred, and the house in which the Holy Family dwelt after their return from Egypt to Nazareth. Chorpenning provides a brief account of the history of the Holy House, including its miraculous transportations in order to protect it from invasion and profanation. ² Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 118. The Society of Jesus also fostered a devotion to the Holy House of Loreto, with many early saints of the Society, including Francis Xavier, Aloysius Gonzaga, and Peter Canisius, making pilgrimages there.
with his hand supporting his head, conforms to the established pose of meditation or contemplation in which the saint is often depicted.\(^3\) The angel’s raised wings and flowing drapery indicates that it has only just alighted. Its raised right arm and the upward gesture of its left hand direct the eye to the upper left corner of the composition, where Blancus has depicted, through strong parallel lines, a radiating sphere surrounded by cloud. The figures are bordered by objects which strongly enforce their domestic existence: earthenware vessels, a burning fireplace, carpenter’s tools, and planks of wood, one of which bears the engraver’s signature.\(^4\) Blancus’ act of signing his work is significant; it clearly designates personal ownership, and it distinguishes this particular engraving from the other images. It may well be an indication that this image held a particularly deep importance or meaning for him.

Once again the pyramidal structure is used to arrange the figures, with Joseph and the angel occupying the apex. As with the second engraving depicting the Holy Family at work, Blancus’ depiction of the Holy Family in a domestic interior and with Joseph at the head of the compositional pyramid serves to emphasise his roles as earthly father of Jesus and as head of the family unit. Morale’s accompanying epigram reads, *Terque quaterque Ioseph felix, cui corporis escas atque animi, coelom Virgo, puerque parat* (“Both thrice and four-times blessed is Joseph for whom the heavenly Virgin and Child prepare bodily and spiritual food).”

Depicting the tenderness of the Holy Family seems to have been a growing preoccupation among artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, seemingly as a reflection of the *devotio moderna*. For example, in Jan Mostaert’s scene of familial affection (Plate 5.1.), entitled *The Holy Family’s supper* and now housed in the Wallraf-Richardtz Museum in Cologne, Joseph is seated next to the Madonna and Child, who watch him as he solemnly slices dark bread.\(^5\) In Lucio Massari’s charming *Holy Family* (Plate 5.2.), painted around 1620 and now held in the Uffizi Gallery collection, Joseph hangs out linen which has just been washed by the Virgin; further, Jacques Callot, in his 1628 etching of the Holy Family held in a private collection in Rome (Plate 5.3.), Joseph attentively waits upon Mary and Jesus who are seated at table.\(^6\) These artworks mark a distinct movement away from previous representations of the

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\(^3\) Wilson, “St Joseph and the Process of Decoding Vincenzo Catena’s *Warrior Adoring the Infant Christ and the Virgin*”, 2013: 126.

\(^4\) Although Blancus initials two other engravings in the *Summary*, this is the only image he signs fully. The signature reads “Christophorus Blancus facit”.


Holy Family which are often not only set in idyllic landscape scenes, but which also tend to present Joseph as an isolated figure who is often represented as disinterested and distinctly removed from Mary and Jesus. The presentation of the saint in these works as an attentive, tender “family man” clearly held importance and relevance for Blancus’ contemporaries and is perhaps reflective of a deeper valuing of familial relationships, particularly those between fathers and sons.

Through Gracián’s writing, Blancus’ engraving, and Morale’s epigram, Book V of the Summary illustrates the ideal balance between action and contemplation. Such an ideal was regarded by St Teresa of Avila as the goal of the spiritual life. Significantly, it was also characteristic of the House of Nazareth, upon which Teresa modelled her monasteries.7

This dualism of action and contemplation has its basis in ancient philosophy. It appears to have flourished from a desire for authenticity, closely linked to the philosopher’s experience of the ‘eternal’ which was, according to Hannah Arendt, developed by Plato around the same time as the discovery of the bios theōrētikos, or life of contemplation.8 This operated alongside what Aristotle termed the bios politikos, which focused on the attainment of immortality by the production of lasting artefacts, specifically referred to human affairs and was placed alongside aesthetics and philosophy.9

While Aristotle’s bios politikos focused on an authentically human way of living, medieval philosophers used the term, translated as vita activa, to denote active human engagement in the world and particularly those methods of engagement which were concerned with perpetuation of life, such as slave labour, artisanship, and trade.10 Additionally, Arendt notes that the vita activa held the glorification of labour as the source of all values.11 This description created a more distinct separation between vita activa and vita contemplativa, with the latter seen as a rejection of all forms of activity and as a prominent element of the “interior life” accessible only to a small group.12 Christianity itself sanctioned and elevated contemplation, whose delights reveal the joys of the hereafter, namely communion with the divine, while at the same

time debasing the *vita activa* as a lower form of life.\(^{13}\) In *De civitate Dei* (Book XIX, Chapter 19) Augustine indicates there are three kinds of life: active, contemplative, and the mean between them. He argues for balance, writing that “One may not be so given to contemplation, that he neglect the good of his neighbour: nor so far in love with action that he forget Divine speculation.”\(^{14}\)

Through contemplation, Augustine stresses, a person is led to the truth, and he indicates that the “holy search after truth”, “our first resolution”, must be the purpose of one’s life unless “the necessity of charity” is imposed upon them.\(^{15}\) Augustine heavily inspired Boethius, whose *Consolation of Philosophy* (524 CE) offers a consideration of what it means to live a good life. The imprisoned, downcast Boethius is visited by Philosophy, who reveals to him that the reason for his “sickness” is that he has forgotten who he is and has fallen into sorrow and exile. Boethius has neglected to understand the aim and end of all things, and he has forgotten the methods by which the universe is led and controlled.\(^{16}\) Contemplation and reasoning are therefore identified here as essential. Additionally, in his *Summa Theologica* Thomas Aquinas notes that while the contemplative life is lived by that “most proper” to man, his mind, the active life involves “the lower powers also, common to us and brutes”.\(^{17}\) Aquinas is thus emphasising that while in contemplation a person engages with something greater than themselves, in the active life they perform activities common to other animals. The *vita contemplativa* is therefore presented as “other worldly”, gazing “longingly towards an imaginary *hors-texte*, the eternal, a realm of pure stillness, of human inactivity – of human absence, indeed.”\(^{18}\)

Contradicting this view was Florentine Coluccio Salutati, who sought to restore the philosophy of the *vita activa politica*, or active political life. His personal letters contain references to the significance of the *vita activa*\(^{19}\), and in 1372 Salutati began work on a treatise, *De Vita Associabili et Operativa*, either opposed to or seeking to expand upon Petrarch’s *De Vita


\(^{17}\) Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1947: IIa-IIæ, Q.182, art. 1.


\(^{19}\) In one such letter, he writes, “the active life is inferior, but many times is to be preferred”, and stresses that such a life “produces and begets” contemplation.
Petrarch’s work emphasises three kinds of solitude, solitude of place (solitudo loci), solitude of time (solitudo temporis, which he writes is experienced by all people in sleep), and solitude of mind (solitudo animi). His argument essentially distinguishes only between the solitudo loci and the solitudo animi. Petrarch writes that, in order to achieve solitudo loci, a person must rid themselves of their concerns.

Of what value to me is the entrance to places alone, what of the fact [that] winding streams carry me along, what help are the lustrous woods, what use are the fixed mountains, if wherever I go my mind follows, to the same extent in the woods as in the towns? It is that [i.e. the mind] which before all else must be put aside; that, I say, that must be left behind at home, and it must be humbly begged of the Lord that he make a pure heart within me, and to renew an upright spirit in this heart. Only then will I penetrate the hidden life of solitude.

In his work, Salutati raises this key argument which presents a challenge to Petrarch: “Since according to the Christian faith man was meant to gain eternal beatitude, why would nature have created him a social and political animal if life in the company of his fellows were incapable of providing another path to salvation?”

In his writings to his friend Zambeccari, who was deliberating entering the contemplative life and becoming a monk, Salutati urges him to consider serving his family, relatives, friends and state in an active life devoted to God, which requires the person to be perfectly motivated by God and to love God. This necessity obliged Salutati to state that the vita activa and vita contemplativa must be united to a certain extent, though the active life must still be valued more greatly than the contemplative life as the former uses the love of God in the service of others, while the second is centred on the self.
Devotional developments during the medieval period saw the vita contemplativa becoming more accessible for the laity. There was a spread in production of Books of Hours and of the Gospels for private meditational use, a rise in Eucharistic adoration in churches, a growth in processions for the feast of Corpus Christi, and a spread in private revelations and visions.25

Blancus clearly emphasises the vita activa by showing Mary and Jesus busy preparing the fish, the “earthly food” described by the epigram, in the foreground. The inclusion of a fish in a scene of the Holy Family is an uncommon occurrence, but the fish itself was in fact a prominent symbol in Carmelite iconography of the seventeenth century.26 It particularly found visualisation in the allegorical subject of the Mystical Trout, in which Joseph catches trout from a stream and gives them to the Christ Child who, using his finger, marks each fish with a cross.27 The story goes on to state that the Virgin Mary presents these fish to St Teresa, while at the same time pressing her Son’s breast from which a spring flows, eventually becoming a river; in this river Teresa replaces these fish, symbolic of the vocations provided her by the Holy Family, and they then swim to Carmel where the river empties.28 Chorpenning notes this allegory is inspired by the following passage in Teresa’s Book of Foundations (1582).

> Only those who have experienced it will believe what pleasure we get from these foundations when we find ourselves at last in a cloister which can be entered by no one from the world. For, however much we may love those in the world, our love is not enough to deprive us of our great happiness when we find ourselves alone. It is as when a great many fish are taken from the river in a net: they cannot live unless they are put back in the river. Even so it is with souls accustomed to live in the streams of the water of their Spouse: if they are drawn out of them by nets, which are the things of the world, they can have no true life until they find themselves back again.29

Thus, Blancus’ depiction of the fish, which Jesus and Mary prepare together, prompts the viewer to recall to mind this allegory and also places the image within a distinct Carmelite framework.

Notwithstanding the Carmelite references, the fish was already a prominent symbol in early Christianity which evoked the divinity of Christ. The fish itself came to represent the Greek

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phrase “Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter”\textsuperscript{30}, which forms the acronym “ichthus”, the word for “fish”.\textsuperscript{31} The fact that Blancus depicts Jesus holding the fish gives additional emphasis to this symbolic relationship. Mary’s preparing to cut the fish and thus shed its blood no doubt foreshadows Christ’s impending sacrifice, with the assistance of the boy Jesus suggesting their co-operation in the divine plan for the redemption of mankind. The overcharged prominence of the fish in this engraving also calls to mind biblical accounts of miraculous events involving fish. Jesus’ holding of the fish, and its size, convey a visual link with the accounts of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Additionally, the engraving’s visual conjunction of child and fish call to mind the numerous Renaissance representations of Tobias and the angel, who use a fish to cure Tobias’ father of his blindness; see, for example, Benozzo Gozzoli’s fresco in the church of Sant’ Agostino in San Gimignano (Plate 5.4.), completed in 1465, in which the child Tobias, who carries a large fish, is led by the hand by Raphael.\textsuperscript{32}

Further activity is present in the engraving in the dog begging at Jesus’ feet and the fire burning beside Mary and Jesus, its smoke rising high. In Christian iconography, the dog can be interpreted as a symbol of the faithful believer, of the Good Shepherd, and of the clergy, particularly the Dominican order;\textsuperscript{33} Blancus’ depiction of the dog’s close interaction with the boy Jesus may be interpreted as an allegory of the desire of the faithful, such as the members of the Archconfraternity, to know Jesus.\textsuperscript{34} The burning fire may communicate sacrifice, thus once again reflecting the sacrifice of Christ; it may also bear a relationship with the presence of God the Father, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and God the Holy Spirit, who was made manifest to the apostles as tongues of fire on Pentecost.\textsuperscript{35} The inclusion of earthenware pots act as a reference to domestic work and productivity with the lumber planks and hammers in the background, further referencing Joseph’s trade. Further, as has been mentioned, the angel’s spread wings seem to indicate it has just entered the scene, and its

\textsuperscript{30} Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour.
\textsuperscript{31} Micah Lee Issitt and Carlyn Main, *Hidden Religion: The Greatest Mysteries and Symbols of the World’s Religious Beliefs* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LCC, 2014): 50. The authors indicate it is unclear whether the symbol of the fish as representative of Christ preceded the co-opting of “ichthus”.
\textsuperscript{34} Werness, *Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in World Art, 2006*: 139.
gestures and body language direct us to the heavenly sphere, shown radiating as the clouds part. In the midst of all this action, however, Blancus places the sleeping Joseph who, judging by the presence of the angel, may be dreaming. The scene of Joseph’s dream, in which the divine will is revealed to him through the message of an angel, has featured as an artistic subject in its own right. The dream itself has been historically regarded as a means by which an individual can establish an effective and real communication with the supernatural, and in the Old Testament it is cast as “a privileged instrument of divine revelation which helps individuals to rise with respect to the contingency of the present moment.” Therefore, the dreams of Joseph of Nazareth act as an effective link with patriarchal figures of the Old Testament, a comparison which, as has been demonstrated, Gracián seeks to emphasise throughout his Summary.

Scripture records four dreams of Joseph, all of which occur within the Gospel of Matthew: the annunciation to Joseph (1:20-21), the warning to flee to Egypt (2:13), the instruction to return to Israel (2:19-20), and the warning not to enter Judaea (2:22). Matthew’s description of the annunciation to Joseph follows the pattern laid out in the Old Testament for the typical annunciation of birth. In his study of the three Christmas stories contained within the Gospels, Fr Raymond E. Brown, S.S. notes that the annunciation pattern, which is also presented in Luke’s Gospel, albeit in a different way, bears particular relationship with those concerning the births of Isaac (Gen 17: 15-21) and of Samson (Jdg 13). Therefore, the very manner of the angel’s revelation to Joseph of the Mystery of the Incarnation finds a parallel with similar instances in the Old Testament Scriptures. This parallel gives the New Testament narrative

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36 The dream of Joseph flourished as an iconographic subject during the seventeenth century. Among many examples Georges de la Tour’s 1640 picture, and Francisco de Moncada’s 1760 painting. For de la Tour, see Jacques Thullier, Georges de la Tour (Paris: Flammarion, 1993): 290. For de Moncada, see Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: Figure 18.

37 Manes, The Melody of Silence, 2014: 167. Manes makes particular reference to dreams which contain commands from God (Jacob in Genesis 31:11-18,24; Solomon in 1 Kings 3:5-15), and dreams in which God communicates through images (Joseph in Genesis 37:5-11, 40:9ff; Gideon in Judges 7:13ff; Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:4).

38 Raymond E. Brown, An Adult Christ at Christmas: Essays on the Three Biblical Christmas Stories, Matthew 2 and Luke 2 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1978): 10. In the annunciation of the birth of Isaac, the angel tells Abraham, “No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac” (Gen 17:19), an address which bears likeness to that conveyed in Matthew’s account of the annunciation to Joseph. Furthermore, in the Book of Judges the angel of the Lord addresses the wife of Manoah in a similar way, saying that she will “conceive and bear a son” who will be “a nazirite (that is, consecrated) to God from birth” and who will “begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines” (Jdg 13:2, 5). This bears comparison to the angel’s message to Joseph that Mary will conceive and bear a son who will “save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21).
greater legitimacy and encourages it to be more easily read as an encounter between the human and the divine.

Joseph’s dreaming may establish a further connection between him and Joseph of Egypt, who is titled as the “man of dreams” (Gen 37:5, 9, 19). His dreams differ from the dreams of Daniel, which are apocalyptic, and they do not need an interpreter or carry revelation.39 Their primary function is to emphasise and clarify Joseph’s legal paternity and familial authority, primarily expressed in the angel’s commands that Joseph take Mary as his wife, name the child and thus confer ancestry upon him, take Mary and Jesus into Egypt, and return and settle in Nazareth.40 These angelic visitations to Joseph in sleep in a sense emphasise his “aloneness”. Unlike Mary who questions the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation (Luke 1:34), there is no one with whom Joseph can speak or from whom he can receive explanations and reassurance. Joseph is alone and makes his decisions in solitude and silence, and when the angel does guide him along the right path, it is in a dream, with no opportunity for Joseph to discuss or question.41 In each instance, once Joseph awakens from sleep he seems to waste no time in acting, which once more indicates his obedience and remarkable trust in God, qualities which are especially emphasised in the fact that the revelations he received were limited to dreams.42 As already discussed, the obedience and trust Joseph shows in his response to these dreams, along with his practice of contemplation, are given emphasis by Gracián in the Summary.

Although Blancus’ Joseph rests his head on his hand with his eyes closed, he is not shown lying prostrate in bed. This representation contrasts with the established visual depiction of dreams. In his fresco cycle at Assisi, Giotto includes the scene of Pope Innocent’s prophetic dream of St Francis, depicting the robed pontiff sleeping on a bed (Plate 5.5.).43 Piero della Francesca’s fresco scene of the dream of Constantine (Plate 5.6.), completed between 1452 and 1466 for the church of San Francesco in Arezzo, places the emperor in bed and surrounded by guards

39 These dreams simply provide the context for the angel’s message. See Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, 1997: 129.
40 Brown notes (The Birth of the Messiah, 1997: 129) that while in patriarchal times the naming of the child could be performed by either the father or the mother (Gen 4:25; 5:3), bestowing this role upon Joseph gives him fatherly authority over the child. This role is further explored by Griffin (“Saint Joseph”, 1972: 224), who states that naming Jesus, Joseph makes him a member of the chosen people and bestows upon him his legal ancestry as a son of David.
and a servant. In contrast, Blancus’ Joseph is fully dressed and sitting upright on a bench. His attire and posture thus make him a figure combining sleep and wakefulness or alertness. In this context, his resting of his head on his hand and his closed eyes could be seen as gestures of contemplation or visionary experience, rather than sleep. Blancus’ depiction of Joseph here seems thus to be an elaboration of earlier representations of Joseph as the sleeper-visionary, particularly in scenes of the Nativity, with prominent examples found in Giotto’s fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel (Plate 5.7.), and in Filippo Lippi’s Adoration of the Child, held in the Uffizi (Plate 5.8.). His head-on-hand pose also calls to mind Michelangelo’s Sistine frescoes of the prophets, in particular Isaiah (Plate 5.9.), who has perhaps just been awoken from the same posture.

The subject of Joseph’s contemplation and prayer is discussed by Gracián in the opening chapters of Book V of the Summary. Gracián writes that Joseph practices all the virtues of good mental prayer: meditating upon his family, fostering conversation with Christ, forgetting the world and its created things, freeing himself from passions, and cultivating patience and perseverance which he demonstrated not only in his trials and in his work, but also in company with Christ, with whom he walked in contemplation. Further, Gracián considers Joseph’s interior silence, which he identifies as an entire peace of soul, a tranquillity of conscience, and a stillness of all power which is born of the secrets spoken by God in the depths of the human heart. This interior silence, he writes, was achieved by Joseph through his conversation with Jesus and Mary, a point established already in Blancus’ engraving discussed in the previous chapter.

In Book V, Gracián offers a description of the daily life of the Holy Family, writing that when Joseph returned home, exhausted after his work, he would take Jesus into his arms so that Mary could more freely perform her household tasks:

...e riposandosi il fanciulino nelle sue braccia, esso Giosef ancora si riposava nelle braccia d’Iddio, dimeticandosi di tutti i suoi travagli, e cessando ogni angoscia, e partendosi finalmente da lui qual si voglia afflizione, perché (riponeva tutti i suoi

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45 For Giotto’s fresco, see Alessando Tomei, Giotto (Florence: Giunti, 1998): 21.
47 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 298.
48 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 313.
49 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 314.
This description of Joseph “resting in the arms of God” perhaps again calls to mind the engraving of Book I, in which Joseph and Mary are shown literally held “in God’s arms” as they solemnise their marriage, and also that of Book III which shows Jesus resting his hands on the shoulders of Joseph and Mary. In this passage, Gracián strongly emphasises the nurturing role of God, who takes on the trials, afflictions and thoughts of Joseph almost in a paternal way.

Gracián notes that the rest and sleep of Joseph is extraordinary. He writes that while in ordinary sleep the soul is at rest, in Joseph’s sleep his soul is “watchful, and more awake and alert than ever”, before continuing:

*Como si el Rey mandasse cerrar las puertas, y reposar los porteros, por que esta ocupado en algun negocio de importancia, y no quiere que nadie le distraya: assi hase el libre aluedrio, quando se recoge en su retrete de la porcion superior para recibir altissimos secretos del Cielo, que manda dormir a todos los porteros de los sentidos, para que no le distrayan con otros pensamientos. Desta manera era el sueño de Ioseph, quando vino el Angel: porque aunque dormia, su coraçon velava, y no era sueño ordinario, que se llama ymagen de muerte, que mientras dura no ay diferencia del hombre a la bestia.*

[Just as the king orders that the doors be closed and that guards be posted because he is occupied with some matter of great importance, and he does not want anyone to interrupt him, the will, when it retires into the secret dwelling place of the superior part of the soul to receive the most sublime heavenly secrets, commands all the sentinels that keep watch over the senses to let them sleep so that they do not distract it with other thoughts. This is what St Joseph’s sleep was like when the angel spoke to him. Although he was sleeping, his heart was vigilant; it was not ordinary sleep, which is called an image of death, and in which man does not differ from beast.]*

Blancus offers a powerful communication of the depth of Joseph’s sleep in his engraving. Joseph is not simply dozing, wearied by the cares of duty and responsibility; rather, in his sleep he engages in active communication with the divine through the presence of the angel. Further,

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the accompanying epigram’s description of the saint being “thrice blessed” is, according to Chorpenning, a clear allusion to the three angelic visitations experienced by Joseph in the Gospel of Matthew.\textsuperscript{52} The epigram, however, extends beyond this in its reference to Joseph as also “four times blessed”. This perhaps indicates the communication between the saint and the divine which occurs outside of sleep, and of the continued contemplation he experiences, even in his home at Nazareth. The epigram indicates that these blessings instil in Joseph a great gift of peace, expressed in the provision of bodily and spiritual food by Mary and Jesus. Of such nourishment, Gracián writes,

\begin{quote}
Avevano si gran vigore e forza le parole di Christo Gesù, e della Sacratissima Vergine Maria, per quietar e pacificare i cuori, di chi l’udiuano che quantunque quello di Giosef fosse stato il più unquieto, e perturbato d’ogni altro, il solo udir continuamente le parole della sua Sposa, e del suo bambino Christo Gesù, sarebbe stato bastante a farlo godere questo silenzio interiore, che è un ritratto vero della beatitudine.
\end{quote}

[The words of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Virgin Mary, had such power and strength to calm and pacify the heart that, although Joseph’s heart was more restless and perturbed than any other, he only had to hear the words of his Spouse and of the Child Jesus to dwell in that interior silence which is a true image of heavenly blessing.\textsuperscript{53}]

These words may also find a presence in Blancus’ engraving. Jesus’ mouth appears to be open, and he is almost smiling, while Mary seems to listen intently as she concentrates on her task. This visualisation directly communicates Gracián’s text, which emphasises that it is the conversation of Jesus and Mary which places Joseph in the sphere of peace and contemplation.

In exploring the distinctions and balance between action and contemplation, Gracián’s \textit{Summary} connects with the writings of St Teresa of Ávila, who shared a close relationship with the author.\textsuperscript{54} Teresa identifies the balance between action and contemplation as the goal of the spiritual life, and the concluding chapter of her \textit{Interior Castle} incorporates this message to her sisters:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[52] Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 120.
\item[54] Gracián shared a close relationship with Teresa of Ávila, who was an essential proponent in the advancement of the cult of Joseph across Western Europe.Attributing her healing from a serious illness to Joseph’s intercession, Teresa encouraged others to develop their own devotion to the saint. Teresa began to see Joseph as her spiritual father and as the father of the reformed Carmel, which came to regard the saint as its founder. It can be argued that given Teresa’s close relationship with Gracián, and Gracián’s fidelity to her foundations and spirituality, Teresa’s devotion to Joseph strongly influenced Gracián’s own dedication to the saint.
\end{footnotes}
I insist again: your foundation must not consist of prayer and contemplation alone: unless you acquire the virtues and practice them, you will always be dwarfs…believe me, both Martha and Mary must entertain Our Lord and keep Him as their Guest, nor must they be so inhospitable as to offer Him no food. How can Mary do this while she sits at His feet, if her sister does not help her?\textsuperscript{55}

In these words, which are reflective of the writings of Salutati and Augustine, Teresa stresses that possessing and practicing the virtues are essential for spiritual growth, and that, as she emphasises in the case of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42), there must be a cooperation between action and contemplation in order to achieve spiritual fulfilment. This theme of cooperation is one that is adopted in the \textit{Summary}, through Blancus’ engraving, Gracián’s text, and Morale’s epigram.

The dichotomy of action and contemplation is a proven feature in scenes of the Holy Family in which Joseph is sleeping. Notably, when artists choose to depict Joseph in sleep they often place him in a corner and removed from the main focus or movement of the piece. In Sebastiano del Piombo’s \textit{The Madonna and Child with Saint Joseph, Saint John the Baptist and a Donor} (Plate 5.10.), the Madonna and Child are observed by an adult John the Baptist, and adored by the donor who kneels below, his hands crossed over his chest in blessing and the Madonna’s hand resting on his shoulder. The Child Jesus, clutching at his mother’s veil, seems as if he is stepping off her lap and onto the arm of the chair, the line of his extended leg drawing the viewer’s gaze down the work. Behind these figures, a grey-haired, bearded Joseph sleeps beside an open curtain,\textsuperscript{56} turned away from the centre of the work and resting his head on his hands.

Such depictions have formed the view that artists sought to present Joseph as an ineffectual, elderly and weary figure, exhausted by the demands of marital and familial life. This view neglects to consider that in Scripture, Joseph slept, and while he slept he received instruction regarding his paternal and authoritative role.\textsuperscript{57} The depiction of Joseph sleeping should thus be read as an expression not merely of weariness, incapacity, or an inability to cope with the demands of family life, but a sign of his openness to the will and instruction of God. Further, it reinforces the established typological connections between Joseph the Patriarch and Joseph


\textsuperscript{56} The inclusion of the curtain in this depiction, and the placement of Joseph beside it, can be seen as a further representation of his role in the Mystery of Redemption.

of Egypt. Just as Joseph of the Old Testament, the interpreter of dreams and the victim of his brothers’ jealousy, is led as a slave into Egypt, thereby saving Israel, so too does Joseph of Nazareth receive revelation in his dreams, and as a result of the envy of Herod is forced to flee into Egypt in order to save the infant Christ, and ultimately all of humanity.58

Joseph’s openness to divine instruction is also expressed in Battista and Dosso Dossi’s *Nativity with Annunciation to the Shepherds* (Plate 2.7). As previously discussed, the similarities depicted in this work between God the Father and Joseph reflect Joseph’s acceptance of and openness to the divine will; however, this work also demonstrates a clear balance between action and contemplation. While Joseph kneels before the Child in reverent adoration, and perhaps contemplation, the fact that he is dressed in traveller’s clothing indicates action, readiness, and that he is prepared to move at any moment whenever the need may arise.59 Within Joseph, therefore, the balance of the “interior life” – of action and contemplation – is powerfully demonstrated, and this balance is also communicated by Blancus in his engraving.

Gracián’s emphasis on the need for balance between action and contemplation would have held importance for the Archconfraternity which, as has been indicated, was comprised predominately of men involved in the wood-working crafts. The combination and harmony between action and contemplation expressed in Blancus’ engravings provided clear instruction on the proper focus of work: it was not solely a person’s primary objective, but was intrinsically connected with prayer and devotion to God.

Gracián concludes with instruction to the Archconfraternity which is centred on achieving this balance between action and contemplation. He first encourages the brethren to cultivate and nurture their prayer life through recitation of the Our Father, and through spending a small time, either in the evening or before work, in meditation on the life and passion of Christ, on the favours, graces, and blessings which they have received from Christ, and on their many grave sins, on death, judgement, hell, and glory.60 It is important to note that Gracián stresses this meditation should be placed either at the end of the day, which may thus enable it to function as a sort of examination of conscience and of the day’s activities, or before work has commenced, and thus a way to guide and direct labour. In this way, Gracián represents once more the importance of balancing action and contemplation. He then stresses the importance

60 Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 255.
of daily Mass attendance not only for the brethren, but also for any Christian, indicating that without this custom it is impossible to recognise the spiritual and temporal goods of this life and to avoid and flee dangers.\footnote{Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 256.} Extending his instruction here beyond the brethren fulfils the original stated intention of Fr Zaragoza, Master of St Peter’s, to produce this book for the goodness of all souls and thus spread it beyond the Archconfraternity.

Gracián further urges the brethren to remember Jesus, Mary, and Joseph while at work: to recall whenever taking into their hands the saw, the plane, the axe, or any other instrument that Jesus and Joseph worked in the same way, and that both Mary and Joseph remained with Christ to hear his words and to contemplate the highest mysteries.\footnote{Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 257.} In this way, Gracián successfully combines elements of action and contemplation, stressing that the brethren pursue contemplation and union with God even when engaging in labour. Finally, the author urges the brethren to fulfil, with sincerity of heart, all commands and statutes surrounding the celebration of feasts, the liturgy of Mass and Vespers, and the observation of solemnities, in order that they will not only perform “exterior ceremonies”, but also “a real and true devotion”.\footnote{…non solo fiesto cerimonie esteriori, ma anche reale e vera devozione. Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 257.} This also communicates an appropriate balance between action and contemplation, with Gracián’s words encouraging the brethren to celebrate the customs and rituals of faith with true devotion, rather than simply performing the actions.

Like the engraving preceding Book II, Blancus’ engraving accompanying Book V of the Summary can be considered as part of the “Holy House of Nazareth” iconographic genre in that it presents the Holy Family within a domestic interior and occupied with domestic tasks. In this engraving, the action and work of Mary and Jesus, who prepare the fish in the foreground, is effectively balanced against the contemplative Joseph, shown receiving divine instruction in sleep. In this way, Blancus visualises the emphasis Gracián places in seeking harmony between action and contemplation, a subject which, as has been demonstrated, was particularly important for St Teresa. The image reinforces that both the active and the contemplative life are essential to family harmony. Furthermore, at its heart the engraving expresses the epigram’s description of Joseph being blessed with both “bodily and spiritual food” prepared by the Virgin and Child. The emblematic cooperation of text, epigram and image ultimately work to present Joseph, while working hard to provide for his family, as
receiving the benefits of their love for him and as enjoying the blessings that come through true contemplation of the divine presence.
CHAPTER SIX: PATRON OF THE DYING

The Summary’s final engraving, which depicts the scene of Joseph’s death, precedes a litany of the saint which is believed to have been composed by Gracián.¹ The image does not bear a particular connection with the litany; rather, its inspiration comes from the third section of Book V.² This chapter will engage in a discussion of the engraving’s artistic features, noting the connection the artwork has with Gracián’s writing, with apocryphal references, writings of the Church Fathers, and with other artworks depicting the same subject. In this way, it will be shown that Blancus’ engraving, its accompanying epigram, and Gracián’s discussion of Joseph’s death and privileges found in Book V work together to present Joseph as the patron of a “good death” and as the recipient of many privileges by his death.

The Summary’s final image (Plate 6) is notable for its palpable tranquillity and uncluttered simplicity.³ In a small room with a single latticed window the Holy Family is gathered. Joseph, an elderly man with creased brow, upturned eyes and wizened face, lies on a bed which occupies much of the compositional space. He appears to be dressed in an undershirt and his legs are covered by a blanket. Beside him, Mary is seated. She is attired once more in long garments and a veil and gently takes Joseph’s left hand in hers. The line of Mary’s arm and her extended fingers encourage the eye to be easily drawn from her to Joseph. She raises her right hand and gestures towards Jesus, standing at Joseph’s right, who is also the focus of her gaze. A man with long, curling hair, a neatly-cut beard and dressed in a voluminous cloak, Jesus looks down at Joseph, taking his right hand in his left while at the same time imparting a blessing. The position of Jesus’ raised hand, and its proximity to Joseph’s face, draws the viewer’s eye again to the central figure. Once more, the true meaning of this image is explicitly conveyed by the epigram, which reads: Mors bona laus Iusti est, laus ergo quanta Iosephi cum Sponsa, et Christo, sic bene qui moritur, “A happy death is the reward of the Just; how great then is Joseph’s reward as he dies so happily with his Spouse and Christ.”

There is no historical evidence for the death of Joseph. Scripture bears no reference to or account of his death; indeed, the evangelists make no direct references to him after Luke’s narrative of Jesus’ coming-of-age. This narrative closes with Jesus returning to Nazareth with

his parents and living in obedience to them (Luke 2:51), a description which indicates that Joseph held the responsibility as head of the family for some time. The Gospels, however, are silent regarding the death of Joseph. It seems as though, at some unidentifiable point, his mission is simply ended, his task completed. Therefore, as there is no Scriptural basis, all details regarding his death have been surmised.

In his discussion of Joseph’s death in Book V, Gracián first considers the supposition that Joseph had already died by the time of Jesus’ Passion and, in fact, before he had begun his public ministry. In supporting his view, he draws particularly from two passages contained in the Gospel of John. John pinpoints the commencement of Jesus’ public ministry at the wedding at Cana, at which he performed “the first of his signs…and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him” (John 2:11). While John notes that the wedding was attended by Jesus’ mother, Mary, and by Jesus and his disciples, Joseph is omitted from the account; a perceivable sign that he had died before the wedding took place. Additionally, after the wedding Jesus is described as travelling to Capernaum with “his mother and his brethren and his disciples”, indicating that Joseph was not present (John 2:12).

The second Scriptural passage referenced by Gracián in his argument is found in the account of Jesus’ crucifixion, where John notes:

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus was his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home (John 19:25-27).

Gracián here states that the fact Mary is entrusted into the care of Jesus’ disciple indicates Joseph was not living at the time of Jesus’ death. He writes that not only would Joseph not leave the Virgin alone at the foot of the cross if he were alive, but also that Jesus would not

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4 Gracián cites from a wealth of sources, including Epiphanius (Panarion, 7.8); Vincent (Sermons on St Joseph); Gerson (On St Joseph); and Ubertino (Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu). See Gracián, Sumario, 1597: 133.

5 The reference to Jesus “brethren” has attracted a lot of interest, in particular inspiring the view that Mary and Joseph were parents to other children. Matthew’s account of the attempt of Jesus’ countrymen to refute him by naming the living members of his family, omitting Joseph but making reference to Jesus’ “brothers” and “sisters”, has been particularly influential in formulating this view. In order to preserve Mary’s perpetual virginity, these children were attributed to Joseph, particularly in apocryphal literature. These writings also presented Joseph as a widower. The words “brothers” and “sisters” are, however, most frequently interpreted to mean “cousins”, and so the precise meaning and use by the evangelist remains ambiguous.
have entrusted Mary into the care of his beloved disciple if her spouse were still living. Gracián further supports his view with references to the writings of those including Epiphanius, Vincent, Ubertine and Jean Gerson, when considering the time when Joseph died. While some writers, such as Ubertine, propose that Joseph died shortly after the finding of the Christ Child in the temple, none specifies the time. Gracián states he holds as fact the opinion of Master Tomás de Trujillo, who writes in his *Harmony of the Gospels* that Joseph died when Jesus was twenty-nine years old, shortly before he was baptised by John. He notes that it does not take much to be persuaded that this was the case if we consider that Joseph’s responsibility was to serve Jesus and his mother according to the poverty they had chosen in this world. Gracián writes that until he began his preaching, Jesus spent his days “in silence and prayer, separate from the conversation of mankind”, and so it was necessary that Joseph take care of the business of carpentry, by which he supported his family; thus, Gracián indicates, God allowed Joseph to remain alive until the time Christ began his preaching. This is arguably visualised in the accompanying engraving and epigram. Jesus is depicted by Blancus as a grown man at the time of Joseph’s death, and the epigram’s titling of Jesus as “Christ” indicates that he has full knowledge of his role as the Messiah.

Gracián continues with the assertion that “What has the most weight in this matter is what the *Oriental History* says about St Joseph.” The *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, also known as the *Oriental History*, is the only apocryphal text to deal primarily and independently with St Joseph. The text, which was translated from Hebrew into Latin in 1522 by Isidoro Isolano, is written almost completely in the voice of Jesus as he speaks to his disciples atop the Mount of Olives. The *Oriental History* was used in liturgy by the Judeo-Christian community in Nazareth as early as the second century and soon spread to Egypt where a feast commemorating

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11 *Y pues se lee, que el Redemptor hasta que comenzo a praedicar estauo siempre en silencio, y oracion, apartado de trato, y conversacion de hombres, decasse entender, que para el trato del officio de Carpinteria, y buscar obras que hazer, y comprar la madera, y vender lo que se hazia para el sustento.* Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 235.  
the death of Joseph was instituted by the Coptic Monophysites on the second of August.\textsuperscript{15} This feast appears to have been the first of its kind ever celebrated.\textsuperscript{16}

Chorpennings indicates that Gracián would have had access to Isolano’s translation, noting that this text had “a marked influence” on the Summary’s discussion of Joseph’s death and privileges.\textsuperscript{17} In the \textit{Oriental History}, Jesus offers this description of Joseph to his disciples:

> There was a man named Joseph who was from Bethlehem, the city of the Jews, which is the city of King David. He was well versed in the skills and art of carpentry. This man, Joseph, was joined in holy matrimony with a woman [Melcha or Escha] who gave him sons and daughters: four boys and two girls; and their names were Judas and Justus, James and Simon, and the names of the girls were Assia and Lydia. Joseph’s wife died, as is decreed for all men, and left James still at a tender age. Joseph was a just man who glorified God in all his deeds. He was accustomed to leave his village to practice his trade as a carpenter, he and his sons, since he lived by the work of his hands, according to the law of Moses.\textsuperscript{18}

This passage presents a characterisation of Joseph that differs from those presented in other apocryphal narratives. The \textit{Oriental History}’s description of Joseph begins with identifying him as having been born in Bethlehem and in this vein affirming his Davidic ancestry. Gracián supports this view in his own description of the saint’s heritage. In the \textit{Oriental History}, Joseph is not the inept carpenter as presented in other apocryphal works, particularly the \textit{Infancy Gospel of Thomas}, but is a man “well versed in the skills and art of carpentry” who is “accustomed to leave his village to practice his trade as a carpenter”, and who “lived by the work of his hands, according to the law of Moses”. Gracián appears to adhere to this representation: as has been seen, he openly describes Joseph’s aptitude and skill in working with both wood and iron. He also shows him as a competent teacher and model for the boy Jesus. This representation of Joseph in the \textit{Oriental History} characterises him not only as an adept worker, but as a man perfectly capable of supporting a family and who dutifully adheres to the Mosaic Law. The History seeks to justify the Scriptural references to Jesus’ “brothers and sisters” by attributing six children to Joseph by a previous marriage, and further references


\textsuperscript{17} Chorpennings, \textit{Just Man}, 1993: 228.

\textsuperscript{18} Barbagallo, \textit{St Joseph in Art}, 2014: 19.
Scripture through its description of Joseph as a “just man who glorified God in all his deeds.” While Gracián challenges the view of Joseph’s previous marriage in his affirmation that Joseph was, like Mary, a perpetual virgin, he notes in Book III Joseph’s justice, which he presents as the means by which the saint glorifies God. The overwhelmingly favourable description of Joseph in the *Oriental History* exists in distinct contrast to the often unflattering portraits of other apocryphal texts.

The *History* provides for the reader a chronology which indicates that Joseph marries at forty, is widowed at 89, receives Mary at 91, and dies at 111. While the Scriptural accounts indicate that Mary and Joseph enjoyed a true marriage and that Jesus was considered to be the natural son of Joseph, the *Oriental History* presents Mary and Joseph’s ages as differing by over seventy-five years. Joseph Lienhard, S.J. notes in his analysis that this text brushes over the “indignity” of the union of an old man with a child.

This work presents Joseph’s marriage to Mary, who again is portrayed as having lived in the temple for much of her childhood, as occurring when she is twelve and not taking place by apparent miraculous or divine intervention, as Joseph is selected by the priests drawing lots. While Gracián’s description of Mary’s consecration in the temple bears similarity with the account given in the *Oriental History*, in Book I of the *Summary* he clearly establishes the presence of the divine in the selection of Joseph, a theme which is also employed in the accompanying engraving and epigram. The *Oriental History* notes that while the Annunciation and discovery of Mary’s pregnancy caused great emotion for Joseph, he was a pious man, returning to his trade as a carpenter after the family’s Flight into Egypt and journey to Nazareth. The resuming of his trade is a clear indication of his fatherly responsibility and of his calling to take care of and protect Mary and Jesus. Gracián’s approach is similar. He notes that while Joseph suffered greatly at the discovery of Mary’s pregnancy, he assumed a fatherly responsibility and a protective role within his family that was bestowed upon him by God.

Joseph is presented in the *History* as being of great youthfulness and vigour despite being very old. His advanced age yet remarkable vitality is regarded as a miracle, with his age helping to preserve the virginity of Mary and his physical vigour necessary to support the needs of his family. The characterisation of Joseph in this way may reflect the common Patristic view that

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asceticism creates physical, psychological, and spiritual equilibrium.\textsuperscript{23} This view finds its origin in St Athanasius’s \textit{Life of St Antony}. After Antony had spent nearly twenty years practicing asceticism alone in the desert, his friends broke down the door of the place where he lived and removed it. Following this,

\begin{quote}
Antony came forth as out of a shrine, as one initiated into sacred mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God. It was the first time that he showed himself outside the fort to those who came to him. When they saw him, they were astonished to see that his body had kept its former appearance, that it was neither obese from want of exercise, nor emaciated from his fastings and struggles with the demons; he was the same man they had known before his retirement. Again, the state of his soul was pure, for it was neither contracted by grief, nor dissipated by pleasure nor pervaded by jollity or dejection. He was not embarrassed when he saw the crowd, nor was he elated at seeing so many there to receive him. No, he had himself completely under control – a man guided by reason and stable in his character.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

This perception of Antony bears similarity with the description Jesus gives of Joseph in the \textit{Oriental History}. Jesus says that Joseph:

\begin{quote}
did not...labour under any bodily weakness, nor had his sight failed, nor had any tooth perished from his mouth nor, for the whole time of his life, was he ever insane; but like a boy he always showed youthful vigour in his business and his limbs remained unimpaired, and free from all pain.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

The \textit{History} itself presents a contrast against the poetic discretion of the Gospels in delving into the particular details of Joseph’s life and final moments.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, the \textit{History} describes the final moment of Joseph’s life as so violent and agonising that only Jesus, whom Joseph describes as “the Saviour and Redeemer of my soul”, is able to calm him by recalling to Joseph’s mind his past, the particular wonders he had seen, and the great faith that had sustained his life.\textsuperscript{27}

Blancus’ engraving actively references the following lines from the \textit{History}, which are recorded by Gracián in the \textit{Summary}:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Chorpenning, \textit{Just Man}, 1993: 228.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Zuffetti, \textit{L’uomo dei sette silenzi}, 2012: 143.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Zuffetti, \textit{L’uomo dei dette silenzi}, 2012: 144; Chorpenning, \textit{Just Man}, 1993: 225.
\end{itemize}
Y el viejo boluo su rostro a mi, y con grandes suspiros me estava mirando, yo me incline y le toque los pies, y tenia su mano entre las mias por una larga hora, y Joseph hazia seiales como mejor po dia, que no le dexasse tenienda los ojos enclauados en mi.

[The old man turned his face toward Me, and with great sighs he was looking at Me. I leaned over him, and I touched his feet and held his hand between My hands for over an hour. Joseph indicated, as best he could, that I should not leave him; his eyes were fixed on Me.]

These words are seen expressed in the engraving. Joseph’s eyes are raised to Jesus, “fixed on him”, and their hands are joined, and the intensity of this connection between Jesus and Joseph can be interpreted as a powerful communication of their relationship, of the love between father and son, and of the presence of God in Joseph’s final moments.

The History continues with the arrival of death itself, which is dramatically conveyed. The room is filled with maleficent power, visible only to Jesus and ready to take Joseph’s soul; Jesus, however, drives the evil spirits away and implores God the Father to send His angels, along with Michael and Gabriel, to bring the soul of Joseph to eternal mercy without additional fear or suffering. Jesus imparts Joseph peace and beseeches His heavenly Father to send a multitude of angels to prepare the body of the saint for burial. While Blancus’ Holy Family is contained within an intimate space, alone and with no representation of violent spirits or the presence of evil, Joseph is presented as anxious and fearful. His shadowed face, with sombre expression, is raised to Jesus, and his right hand is tense, the fingers splayed. The anxiety of Joseph as conveyed in the History is thus clearly expressed by Blancus.

The History of Joseph the Carpenter was primarily influential in the fields of literature and art in that it describes the death of the saint through the viewpoint of Christ, who narrates the tale to His disciples, and thus it acts as a sort of eyewitness report. The spread of Isolano’s translation of the History of Joseph the Carpenter not only influenced the popularity in the Death of St Joseph as an artistic subject, but also led to the saint becoming recognised as the patron of a “good death”, “the shelter of the agonising”, and the intercessor of many confraternities. The traditional consideration of Joseph as the “patron of a good death” has

31 Pestilli, Paolo de Matteis: Neapolitan Painting and Cultural History in Baroque Europe, 2013: 207.
32 Pestilli, Paolo de Matteis: Neapolitan Painting and Cultural History in Baroque Europe, 2013: 207.
been accepted as early as St Bernardine of Siena who, along with other theologians such as Irenaeus, maintained that, as with the Virgin, Joseph’s body had been assumed into heaven.\textsuperscript{33}

As the cult of St Joseph spread over the sixteenth century, particularly in Spain, many texts began to emerge with him as their subject.\textsuperscript{34} A prominent example of these is the \textit{Vita Christi}, or “Life of Christ”, written by the nun Isabella de Villena and published in Valencia in 1513, which narrates the story of the death of Joseph in particularly romanticised language and in accordance with popular appeal, thus encouraging the people to come to learn about, know, and love God.\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{Vita Christi} narrates that when Jesus was already twenty-five, Joseph heard him speaking to Mary of his Passion. Following this, he was seized with an unbearable blow, and said to his son: “Allow me to die before I can see all your pain. I cannot bear it.”\textsuperscript{36} The text indicates Jesus accepted this request, yet when it came to the time for Joseph to leave the world, even he trembled, yet is consoled by Jesus, who says: “Be calm, my father, because I have great love for you”, and promises Joseph that all his sins will be forgiven, and that he will be given a throne with the seraphim on the day of Jesus’ ascension.\textsuperscript{37}

In his study of the \textit{Summary’s} engravings, Chorpenning notes that the Death of St Joseph does not appear as an artistic subject prior to the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{38} As previously explored, martyrdom was exalted and glorified within the Catholic Church, with the martyr seen as possessing heroic virtue, and so Joseph, who died a natural death, was in a sense excluded.

Representations of the scene of Joseph’s death, while certainly less frequent than other scenes which present him as a participant in the life of Christ, grew in popularity as an artistic theme after the Council of Trent.\textsuperscript{39} This is perhaps a reflection of the way in which death was perceived during the late medieval period and into the Renaissance. The twelfth-century French monastic Peter of Celle commented that the monk should “depict death before your eyes, how


\textsuperscript{34} This rise in devotion to Joseph was so prominent that in Émile Mâle’s classic art historical study (\textit{L’art religieux de la fin du XVIIe siècle}, 1951) Spain is described as “the chosen land of St Joseph”. English translation taken from Joseph F. Chorpenning, \textit{Mexican Devotional Retablos: From the Peters Collection} (Philadelphia: St Joseph’s University Press, 1994): 39.

\textsuperscript{35} Zuffetti, \textit{L’uomo dei sette silenzi}, 2012: 145.

\textsuperscript{36} Zuffetti, \textit{L’uomo dei sette silenzi}, 2012: 145.

\textsuperscript{37} Zuffetti, \textit{L’uomo dei sette silenzi}, 2012: 145. In this passage, the author alludes to the fact that Joseph would have been freed from Purgatory at this moment, along with the ancient patriarchs and those who had lived spotless lives on earth.

\textsuperscript{38} Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 122.

\textsuperscript{39} Bolger Foster, \textit{The Iconography of St Joseph}, 1978: 16.
horrifying the face”. The particular efforts of the mendicant friars, with their appeal to the emotions and common reference to “memento mori”, meant that death never faded from the medieval mind. Death was, therefore, so much at the forefront of daily life that it could not be considered as more than a fact of nature, yet it was still seen as essential for a person to die well in order to achieve salvation. The image of Joseph’s peaceful death, supported and comforted by Jesus and Mary and provided with the proper preparations for salvation, meant that the saint was considered one who could accompany and intercede for the soul on their final journey. Furthermore, paintings of Joseph’s death visualised for audiences the “exemplary Catholic death” and raised Joseph as the patron of such a death.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century and continuing into the fourteenth century, people feared death less than they dreaded the possibility of dying without receiving the sacraments, making a will, or having someone attending to their remains. Calamitous events leading to significant loss of life, particularly the Hundred Years’ War and the Black Death, seem to have intensified the dread surrounding sudden death. Perhaps adding to this fear was the Beatific Vision controversy. In 1331, Pope John XXII stated that the souls of the just did not possess eternal life or experience a beatific vision of God before the resurrection of the body. The pontiff was forced to recant this on his deathbed due to the outcry of indignation it caused.

For the Christian faithful of this period, their ultimate spiritual fate was determined by unseen forces which could only be guided by tangible devotions, such as images of the saints or the “wound of Christ”, the Eucharist, intercessory prayers, or prayers seeking indulgences. The Church guided the faithful in outlining specific criteria essential for a “good death”, with an emphasis on the individual making a confession to their parish priest and receiving Extreme Unction, or the Last Rites.

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bequeath gifts to abbeys or join a confraternity with the assurance of themselves and their relatives being remembered in prayer.\textsuperscript{48} Perhaps as a response to this deepening interest, confraternities dedicated to the souls in Purgatory multiplied during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{49}

It seems almost from this preoccupation with salvation that the image of Joseph as patron of a “good death” began to emerge. Representations of his peaceful passing, supported and comforted by Jesus and Mary and provided with the proper preparations for salvation, meant that the saint was understood as one who could accompany and intercede for the soul on their final journey. Furthermore, paintings of Joseph’s death visualised for audiences the “exemplary Catholic death” and also raised Joseph as the patron of such a death.\textsuperscript{50}

The fact that the Death of Joseph is a later iconographical development means that there is very limited reference to the scene which precedes the writing of Gracián’s \textit{Summary}. Villaseñor Black notes that the composition of the scene of Joseph’s death is modelled on the Dormition of Mary.\textsuperscript{51} This tradition is based on multiple apocryphal accounts, such as the \textit{Protoevangelium of James} and Pseudo-Dionysius, which themselves became sources for the Eastern Church’s Feast of the Dormition and for the Mariological doctrine of the Roman Church of the Assumption.\textsuperscript{52} Scenes of the Dormition typically depict the Virgin reclining on a bed, with the apostles looking on. This compositional structure is represented in Fra Angelico’s predella panel for his altarpiece of the Coronation of the Virgin (Plate 6.1), painted between 1430 and 1435 and housed in Florence’s Museo del San Marco.\textsuperscript{53} In this artwork, the Virgin, robed and with a nimbus, lies on a bier and is surrounded by the apostles and two angels who hold a thurible and an incense boat, items which are used to burn charcoal or incense during worship services. The inclusion of these symbols, which would conceivably have been recognisable for Fra Angelico’s original audience, work to convey within this scene reverence and sanctity. In the centre of the piece, Christ appears in glory within a mandorla, raising his right hand in blessing over the Virgin while in his left hand he supports a small child,

\textsuperscript{48} Vauchez, \textit{The Laity in the Middle Ages}, 1993: 87.
\textsuperscript{49} Vauchez, \textit{The Laity in the Middle Ages}, 1993: 23.
\textsuperscript{50} Black, \textit{Creating the Cult of St Joseph}, 2006: 135.
\textsuperscript{51} An expression of the belief that Mary did not truly die, but fell into a deep sleep for three days before she was assumed into heaven.
traditionally understood to be the soul of Mary.\textsuperscript{54} Several of these features are also seen in El Greco’s painting of the scene (Plate 6.2.), completed before 1567 for the Holy Cathedral of the Dormition of the Virgin in Syros.\textsuperscript{55} The centrally-placed figure of the Virgin lies on a bier, surrounded by the apostles and various saints. Christ stands above her, surrounded by angels. Holding in his hands her soul, rendered as a newborn baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. Unlike in Fra Angelico’s predella scene, El Greco’s Christ is not standing upright, but instead leans over the body of the Virgin, a gesture which can be read as a sign of intimacy and relationship.

Villaseñor Black notes that while there are similarities between the Dormition of Mary and the composition of Joseph’s death, the mood conveyed in the two scenes are distinctly different. Joseph’s passing, she writes, is presented as “less formal, less peaceful, and ultimately, less dignified.”\textsuperscript{56} The inclusion of objects relevant to liturgical worship, especially the thurible, conveys within the Dormition scene a sense of the sacred which is not emphasised as strongly in the scene of Joseph’s death. While in Dormition scenes, the peaceful, often richly-dressed body of Mary is surrounded by mournful onlookers, Blancus’ depiction of the dying Joseph shows him dressed in an undershirt, his expression tense and the bedsheets creased. Such a representation can be seen to convey a sense of the ordinary and profound humility, which would arguably have been poignant for the original viewers of Blancus’ engraving. The peaceful yet formal overtones of the Dormition scenes appear to emphasise the dignity of Mary rather than appeal to the sensibilities and experiences of the audience. Thus, representations of Joseph surrounded by Mary and Jesus, and as fearful and unsettled, perhaps resonated more clearly with sixteenth-century audiences which may have held anxieties regarding death and salvation.

Villaseñor Black further draws a contrast between the good death of Joseph and the Old Testament scene of the Blessing of Jacob (Plates 6.3. and 6.4.), in which Jacob deceives his blind, infirm father, Isaac the patriarch, into bestowing upon him the birthright of his older

\textsuperscript{54} This representation may be taken from the ancient account given of Mary’s dormition, as quoted by Kimball: “The Lord embraced her, and he took her holy soul and placed in in Michael’s [the archangel] hands….And we, the apostles, beheld the soul of Mary as it was given into Michael’s hands.” See Kimball, “Mary of Galilee, Mother and Mystic”, 2013: 15. It is also important to note that this is not an exclusive feature of Marian iconography; depictions of other saints and holy figures also include miniatures of themselves, an image of their soul, being taken into heaven.


\textsuperscript{56} Black, Creating the Cult of St Joseph, 2006: 138.
The deception of Isaac by his wife and son is contrasted against scenes of Joseph’s death, which frequently show Jesus imparting a blessing and Mary offering comfort. Thus, Mary and Jesus provide for Joseph’s physical and spiritual needs in a manner which is not found in representations of the blessing of Jacob. The presence of Mary and Jesus at the death of Joseph, and their provision for his needs, enables this death to be classified as blessed and “happy”. Blancus himself employs this approach in his own work. Joseph is turned towards Jesus, who is shown blessing him, while Mary is seated by the bed, holding her husband’s hand in her own. Blancus thus not only presents an intimate familial scene, but emphasises that Joseph in his final moments was afforded spiritual and physical comfort by virtue of his connection with Jesus and Mary. In this way, the artist offers a clear message to his readers: if they, like Joseph, stay close to Jesus and Mary, they also possess the hope of a “happy death”.

Blancus’ scene is particularly notable in that, unlike many depictions of Joseph’s death, it does not contain overt references to the supernatural or the divine. Blancus represents a simple scene with Joseph dying in the close company of Mary and Jesus, which contrasts the prevailing iconographic type of including several onlookers, angels visiting Joseph at the hour of his death and preparing to carry his soul to heaven, or putti who sometimes hold a crown above Joseph’s head or the saint’s attributes of the stem of lilies or the flowering staff (Plates 6.5. and 6.6.). The inclusion of angels renders the scene idyllic, stresses the presence of the divine, and further works to convey a sense of peace which presents a clear contrast with the often-mournful expressions of Mary and Jesus. It was itself seen as a means of enabling the viewer to identify death with peacefulness and life with God, and thus established death as an artistic theme particularly meaningful to popular devotion. Blancus’ omission of these elements not only strengthens the intimacy of the scene but also emphasises the “ordinariness” and humility of Joseph’s life and of his death. The Summary does not present Joseph’s “happy death” as a distant ideal, but as one which could be both aspired to and attained by the faithful.

The subject of the death of Joseph would have held particular importance for the confraternity of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami. Death itself was a prominent theme in the devotional life of confraternities, as members could expect that brethren would make appropriate funerary

58 Black, Creating the Cult of St Joseph, 2006: 141.
60 Barbagallo, St Joseph in Art, 2014: 83.
arrangements and, if necessary, guarantee financial assistance to their surviving family. In *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century*, Christopher F. Black emphasises that joining a confraternity was for many people a primary means of ensuring their own salvation, and possibly the salvation of those close to them. Membership of the group, along with the practice of charitable works and devotion, was seen as preparatory measures for a good death, after which the individual’s confreres and consœurs would “honour the body, and help dispatch the body as quickly as possible through Purgatory.” Death was, therefore, something that may have incited feelings of anxiety or dread, and it was certainly something of an unknown. Thus, it seems, individuals would seek ways of guaranteeing they would die well, have a suitable passage into the afterlife with a decent funeral, be relieved swiftly from Purgatory, and thus enter Heaven.

Although the current artworks found in the church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami, and in its adjoining oratory, were completed after the *Summary* was published, they, not surprisingly, do emphasise the significance the death of Joseph held for the confraternity. The first chapel on the right side of the church has as its altarpiece the Transition of Joseph, completed in 1690 by Bartolomeo Colombo. It is situated opposite Orazio Bianchi’s altarpiece depicting the marriage of Mary and Joseph. Upon entering the oratory, the viewer is immediately drawn to the altar directly opposite, above which is depicted a fresco scene of the death of the saint, completed by Marco Tullio Montagna in 1637 (Plate 6.6). It is thus clear that the death of Joseph, represented in both instances as a calming scene in which he is consoled by Jesus and Mary, and devoid of any supernatural symbolism, was a prominent focus for the confraternity’s brethren and one they wanted to give visual significance. This scene of Joseph comforted in his last agony perhaps acted as consolation for the brethren and instilled in them a hope that if they stayed close to Joseph throughout life, at their own death they would receive comfort from Jesus and Mary.

Gracián writes that as patron of “a good death”, Joseph provides particular spiritual and temporal consolation and mercies to those who are devoted to him: too many to contain within his *Summary*. The author indicates that if the devotees of Joseph truly love, honour and celebrate him, they will be great servants of God, receiving in all tribulations deep

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64 Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 325.
He once again draws attention to the importance of devotion to the Virgin Mary, the spouse of Joseph and the most affable mother. This, along with fervent devotion to Jesus Christ, will ensure that at the hour of death the devotee will be accompanied by a good friend, Joseph. In this sense, Gracián unites his writing with the message conveyed in the epigram, that a “happy death” is the reward of those who are “just”.

In the Summary, Joseph is not only presented to the brethren as a practical model for living, and particularly worthy of emulating in the way he exercises his roles as father and husband, but also as a model for dying. Joseph is distinctly humanised in this scene, shown agitated and being comforted and supported by his family members, and this conceivably establishes a distinct connection between him and the Summary’s original audience for whom death would have been a significant preoccupation. In his conclusion to Book V, Gracián parallels the devotee with Joseph in his emphasis on the importance of devotion to Jesus and Mary. As seen throughout the Summary, this is visualised in Blancus’ depiction of physical intimacy between Jesus, Mary and Joseph, primarily expressed through their gestures and gazes. Gracián’s text, Blancus’ engraving and Morale’s epigram ultimately present Joseph as a model to be emulated. Joseph, the just man, who died in the company of Jesus and Mary, stands as the model for all men who, if they practice a virtuous life, will attain the “happy death” that is their reward.

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65 Gracián, Sumario, 1597: 325.
66 Gracián, Sumario, 1597: 326.
67 Gracián, Sumario, 1597: 326.
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In the closing chapters of his Summary, Gracián gives a brief account of his own devotion to St Joseph, whom he indicates he first came to know as a young boy. He writes that from Joseph, and from the Virgin Mary, he experienced many interior and exterior graces; many as a child and young man, some as a religious, as a superior, and as a fugitive, and particularly in his trials, exiles, journeys, shipwrecks, captivity, and finally in his freedom. Consequently, the image of Joseph that arises in the Summary is not surprising and is tightly aligned to Gracian’s own experience and relationship with the saint.

The Summary, through its consideration of Joseph’s qualities, roles and responsibilities, presents Joseph as an inspiring saintly model of masculinity and a powerful intercessor for both laymen and the labourers. It successfully achieves this through its emblematic composition, which this thesis has shown to be a crucial factor when considering the Summary’s message. Fr Chorpenning states that the engravings of the Summary, with their combination of picture and epigram, represent “the full potential of the printed image”. Following Chorpenning’s pioneering study of the Summary, this thesis has demonstrated just how closely linked these three elements are, arguing that the engravings of the Summary would by no means achieve their true function without collaboration with the epigrams and text de facto; likewise, the text of the Summary cannot be fully understood without the engravings and epigrams. It is through their cooperation that the Summary presents a comprehensive and authentic typology of Joseph, representing the saint in turn as the husband of the Virgin, the foster father of Jesus and a parallel of God the Artisan, as a just man, an angel on earth, as perfectly balancing action and contemplation, and as patron of the dying – in total, the complete fulfilment of contemporary masculine ideals. This portrayal of Joseph in the Summary was successful in codifying his typology, in encouraging devotion to and emulation of Joseph and in shaping how the faithful interacted with him, from the members of the Archconfraternity, its immediate audience, to devotional circles beyond.

Throughout the Summary, Joseph is presented as a parallel or fulfilment of the Old Testament patriarchs, particularly Joseph of Egypt. This is seen in Book I, where similarities between the two figures serve to present the saint as the only man, out of all men ever created, who could truly fulfil the role of Mary’s husband. The engraving preceding Book III, in its presentation

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1 Gracián, Sommario, 1597: 338.
of Jesus resting his hands upon Mary and Joseph’s shoulders, corresponds with Gracián’s description of Joseph as the “last stone” above which the cornerstone, Jesus, is placed, and as the containing within himself all the virtues of the Old Testament fathers. Book V, in its representation of Joseph’s dream, connects the saint again with his Old Testament namesake but also with other key dreamers, such as David and Solomon. These analogies work to bestow validity upon the saint, to emphasise his legitimacy as Mary’s husband and his fundamental role as the fulfilment, even summit, of the Old Testament patriarchs, and to present him as a more powerful model for veneration and imitation.

The *Summary* also characterises Joseph as an intimate participator in the Divine Mystery. This theme is given strong expression in Blancus’ engraving preceding Book II, where the depiction of Jesus, Mary and Joseph each using thread in their work indicates their collaboration with God in bringing about divine Redemption. The engraving preceding Book IV also explores this theme in its focus on the preparation of a fish for dinner. Here, Mary and Jesus prepare the food while Joseph, in a dream state, is inspired by an angel. The whole scene allegorically references the co-operation of the Holy Family in shielding the Mystery of the Incarnation and in allowing for Redemption to occur through the Passion of Jesus.

This collaboration ultimately reveals Joseph to be intimately connected and to collaborate with God the Father, and further parallels the Holy Family with the Holy Trinity. The pyramidal compositions of Blancus’ engravings, some more explicit and others more creative, have been shown to illustrate this concept in an immediately tangible way by literally envisioning the Holy Family as the axis of the pyramid. The communion between the Holy Family and the Holy Trinity is given direct reference in the engraving preceding Book I. Its semi-anthropomorphic inclusion of God the Father, whose physical encircling of Mary and Joseph unifies them intimately, is accompanied by Gracián’s parallel of each member of the Holy Family with a respective Person of the Trinity. This composition is paralleled in the engraving preceding Book III, in which Jesus at the apex encircles the shoulders of his seated parents. Joseph takes the hieratic position in the second and fifth engravings, with the engraving preceding Book II successfully collaborating with Morale’s epigram and Gracián’s description of Joseph’s fulfilment of the offices of fatherhood to parallel him with God the Father. The engravings accompanying Books IV and VI still incorporate a pyramidal structure, but in a less overt way. The inclusion of this compositional element throughout the engravings of the *Summary* successfully unifies them and communicates in a deeper way the intimate and harmonious cooperation of the Holy Family and their connection with the Holy Trinity.
The *Summary* effectively presents Joseph as an imitable model of fatherhood, despite the fact he did not generate Jesus. Blancus’ tender scene of familial intimacy preceding Book II depicts Joseph closely working with Jesus and alongside Mary, whose modest posture and gaze indicates her submission to him as her husband. Blancus’ masterful composition of this scene works to communicate each of the offices of fatherhood identified by Gracián in the text of his chapter, thus successfully demonstrating that Joseph can rightfully be titled the “father of Jesus”. Book IV also offers a representation of Joseph as father through the visual depiction of Joseph carrying Jesus on his shoulders, presenting for the viewer a scene of familial tenderness and fatherly care which is given additional emphasis in Gracián’s description of Joseph’s protection of Jesus and Mary in all their trials.

Joseph’s masculinity is also depicted in the *Summary* as genuine and tangible. Although Book I adopts the view that Joseph and Mary shared a virginal marriage, it presents this marriage in a way which does not deny Joseph the rights and responsibilities of a husband. In this way, it reflects the works of Augustine and Aquinas, among others, the Counter-Reformational shift in approaching sacramental marriage, and the developing interest and growth in the recognition of saints who were virginal and married, especially St Elzear of Sabran and his wife, Blessed Delphine. Although Book II shows Joseph interacting with Mary and Jesus in an intimate family scene, it does not follow the tradition of the apocryphal narratives and Mystery plays in using domestic scenarios to downplay his masculine authority. Rather, the tender scene of the Holy Family in Joseph’s workshop reflects the spread of the *devotio moderna*, encouraging a deeper consideration of the humanity of Jesus and of the Holy Family’s everyday life and struggles. Joseph, at the apex of the composition, is clearly articulated as the family head and authority. In this way, the Holy Family reflected contemporary ideals, becoming relevant and easy to emulate. The “just man” presented in Book III is shown to contain within himself all theological and moral virtues, and thus Joseph is presented as a figure whom men could feel confident and comfortable in imitating. The balance of joy and sorrow and of action and contemplation that Joseph possesses in Books IV and V would have been relatable to the *Summary*’s contemporary audience as they navigated a society in the stages of redefinition after the turbulence of war, plague and religious upheaval. Finally, Book V’s representation of Joseph dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary offers a reassuring picture for the *Summary*’s audience, presenting “a good death” as something which is both desirable and attainable.

Joseph is therefore powerfully presented in the *Summary* as an imitable model of sanctity. This is largely achieved by Blancus’ depictions of simple scenes relevant to his contemporary
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audience: a marriage, a family busy at work and sharing times of great joy and intimacy as well as experiences of suffering. The settings and scenes are not idealised, nor are the figures accompanied by supernatural beings, angels, or divine fanfare\(^3\). With the exception of the first engraving, in which Mary and Joseph are accompanied by the priest and the visual-textual representation of God the Father through the descending arms and the Tetragrammaton, and of the fifth which features the angel, Blancus depicts the Holy Family in isolation. This choice arguably works to communicate even more strongly the Summary’s representation of the Holy Family as a model worthy and capable of emulation. The simplicity of these scenes is both a reflection of and reflected by the text \textit{de facto}. Although Gracián indicates that a key aim of his work is to achieve the glory of the saint, he does so in a way which makes Joseph relatable to the sixteenth-century layman: the primary audience of the book.

The \textit{Summary’s} impact on Josephine devotion has been profound. Still, there are elements of the \textit{Summary’s} influence which have not yet been explored in depth. This thesis’ refined scope has highlighted several areas which could potentially form the basis of future works. The limited information available on the circumstances and process of the writing of the \textit{Summary} has meant this study has not entered into a deep consideration of the work’s patronage and commissioning, both of which would contribute further to the exploration of the \textit{Summary’s} composition. Further, due to the inaccessibility of archival material regarding the Archconfraternity’s links to the \textit{Summary}, and regarding the Oratory of St Joseph’s acquisition of the Italian translation of the text, this study has not explored the deeper history of the document. Future research may explore these areas, as well as the life and work of Christophorus Blancus, about whom little is known.

An overarching aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate the need for deeper scholarly attention to the field of Josephine research and for the advancement of Josephine theology. It is clear that the \textit{Summary} itself, by presenting a comprehensive typology of the saint, sought to unite all elements of Josephine theology and thereby offer clear doctrinal and devotional instruction. In his book, \textit{Joseph, the man closest to Jesus: the complete life, theology and devotional history of St Joseph}, Fr Francis L. Filas raises pertinent questions regarding the reasons for researching and advancing Josephine theology. He writes:

\begin{quote}
What is the purpose of studying the theology of St Joseph? Should we not be content to accept the saint merely as the protector of Mary and Jesus, calling him
\end{quote}

\(^3\) When God is depicted in the first engraving, it is a very simple illustration which emphasises His close intimacy with Mary and Joseph more than it asserts His power.
“foster father”? Why seek greater knowledge, through study of Scripture and Church history, when, as everyone knows, there is so little to be known about the saint? Why risk imposing upon the rights of the Father Almighty, or detracting from the dignity and rank of the Blessed Virgin?^4

Filas indicates that the principal answer to such questions lies in the fact that “knowledge is the basis for action”, and that the more the faithful know about Joseph, the more they will love, imitate, and seek to learn all possible details of his dignity and holiness. In essence, Filas is suggesting that by understanding the life and actions of an ideal of masculine behaviour such as Joseph, the faithful will be inspired to live in the same way.

By interpreting representations of Joseph’s masculinity and fatherhood, such as those found in the Summary, in light of their particular social, religious, and cultural contexts, a clearer understanding of and appreciation for the history of devotion and society can be gained. Joseph is presented here as the definitive model of the ideal man. Examining the Summary’s construction of Joseph as a model of masculinity allows us to enter, to a degree, the sixteenth-century world of Blancus, Morale and Gracián. In its presentation of masculine ideals, the Summary emphasises that the seemingly one-dimensional concept of “masculinity” is much more complex and rich than originally thought. It encourages the emergence of a more realistic portrait of men and maleness. The ideal man is presented as successfully occupying authority and responsibility within the family unit, while also actively engaging in an intimate and harmonious relationship with his wife and children and cultivating authentic interaction with God. This presentation can help to break down the narrow ideas of past views of masculinity and femininity. Even if an ideal, and projected through the lens of a saintly life, the Summary clarifies the values, expectations and possibilities engendered in Early Modern male performance. Perhaps such an understanding can offer contemporary historians a new view of the past and new ways of interpreting the performance of masculinities today.

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