

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

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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".<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph F. Chorpenning, "St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative: Christophorus Blancus' Engravings for the *Summary of the Excellencies of St Joseph* (1597)", *Joseph of Nazareth Through the Centuries*, ed. Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S.F.S. (Philadelphia: St Joseph's University Press, 2011): 108-109.

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