

CHAPTER TWO: NURTURING FATHER OF THE SON OF GOD

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 One of the first historical references to Joseph's fatherhood comes from the second century, during which the Samaritan philosopher Justin Martyr wrote in his *Dialogue with Trypho* that Jesus "was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...)." ¹

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

¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, ed. Michael Slusser (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003): 138.

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.")¹

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.² 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.³ 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."⁴

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.

¹ Chorpenning, "St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative", 2011: 111.

² Black, *Creating the Cult of St Joseph*, 2006: 22.

³ Joseph Mueller, *The Fatherhood of St Joseph* (St Louis: Herder, 1952): 2-3; Raphael M. Huber, "Saint Joseph and the Friars Minor Conventual: An Historico-Ascetical-Liturgical Study", *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, vol. XI (2), July-December 1963: 252.

⁴ Filas, *Joseph and Jesus*, 1952: 21.

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, ò artista, il quale creò il mondo...trovò un Fabro, artista, ò legnaiuolo, chiamato Giosef, 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

⁵Lienhard, "St Joseph in Early Christianity", 2011: 16.

⁶ Francis L. Filas, S.J., *Joseph Most Just: theological questions about St Joseph* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., c. 1956): 5.

⁷ Chorpenning, "The Enigma of St Joseph in Poussin's 'Holy Family on the Steps'", 1997: 279.

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,

...felicì potete chiamarui voi altri fratelli legnaiuoli, poi che avete due sì 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.

⁹ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 115. English translation taken from Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 156.

¹⁰ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 119.

¹¹ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 119-122

consideration”, and the “T-square of conformity”.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”.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.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 *Deus Faber*, God the Divine Artisan and creator of the world.

These offices are: tutor, spiritual father, governor, guardian, 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,

¹² ...*meni in filo da tingere del conoscimento sopra la tavola della sua conscienzi, 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, *Sommario*, 1597: 120.

¹³ These offices are taken from Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 77-83.

¹⁴ Chorpenning, *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, acciò 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

¹⁵ Douglas Blow, *On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy: Men, Their Professions, and Their Beards* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015): 8.

¹⁶ Blow, *On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy*, 2015: 8.

¹⁷ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 129.

¹⁸ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 77. English translation taken from Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 129-130.

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

²⁰ Gracián, *Sumario*, 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

²¹ These gifts are given as wisdom, intellect, science, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of God. See Isidoro Isolano, *Summa de donis Sancti Ioseph, Sponsi Beatissime Virginis Mariae, ac Patris Putativi Christi Jesus Dei Immortalis*, vol. 2. (Avignon: Amédée Chaillot, 1861): 100-127.

²² Isidoro Isolano, *Summa*, vol. 2, 1861: 100.

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.

²⁴ Sarah L. Bastow, “The Catholic Gentlemen of the North: Unreformed in the Age of Reformation?”, *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, ed. P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 217; Michael Bennett, “Military Masculinity in England and Northern France, c. 1050-1225”. *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. Dawn M. Hadley (London and New York: Longman, 1999): 73.

²⁵ Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003): 67.

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.

²⁷ *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Krayer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 1; Charles G. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 8; Brian Patrick McGuire, “Becoming a Father and a Husband: St Joseph in Bernard of Clairvaux and Jean Gerson”, in Joseph F. Chorprenning, O.S. F. S., *Joseph of Nazareth Through the Centuries* (Philadelphia: St Joseph’s University Press, 2011): 58. It is noted (see Krayer particularly) that a “liberal education”, or *studia humanitatis*, would incorporate the study of what we would consider today as “arts” subjects, particularly grammar, rhetoric, poetry, language, literature, history, and moral philosophy.

²⁸ Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, 2006: 8.

²⁹ Krayer, *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, 2004: 1-2.

³⁰ Blow, *On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy*, 2015: 93.

³¹ The spread of Eastern relics connected with Christ and the Virgin motivated this interest, and led particularly to developments in the Marian cult and to a deeper consideration of the Virgin’s human emotions, humility and earthly existence. André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: religious beliefs and devotional practices*, ed. Daniel E. Bornstein, trans. Margery J. Schneider (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993): 17, 25; Margaret R. Miles, “Achieving the Christian Body: Visual Incentives to Imitation of Christ in the Christian West”, *Interpreting Christian Art: Reflections on Christian Art*, ed. Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal Carl Parsons (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003): 15; Black, *Creating the Cult of St Joseph*, 2006: 22.

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).³³ 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.³⁴

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.³⁵ 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."³⁶ 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

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.

³⁵ Yael Manes, *Motherhood and Patriarchal Masculinities in Sixteenth-Century Italian Comedy* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011): 51.; Robert Black, *Renaissance Thought: a reader* (London: Routledge, 2001): 72.

³⁶ Black, *Renaissance Thought*, 2001: 92, 93.

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.³⁷ 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.³⁸

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.³⁹

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.⁴⁰ 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

³⁷ Denis O'Shea, *Mary and Joseph, their lives and their times* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1949): 67. Mary W. Helms, "Joseph the Smith and the Salvational Transformation of Matter in Early Medieval Europe". *Anthropos* 101 (2), 2006: 454. Several Church Fathers, including St Hilary, the Venerable Bede and St Peter Chrysologus, assert that Joseph was a worker in iron. See Michael Gasnier, O.P., *Joseph the Silent*, trans. Jane Wynne Saul (New York: P.J. Kennedy and Sons, 1962):34.

³⁸ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991): 281.

³⁹ Francis L. Filas, S.J., *The Man Nearest to Christ: Nature and Historic Development of the Devotion to Saint Joseph* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1944): 56.

⁴⁰ Wolfgang Prohaska, *Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna: The Paintings* (London: Scala, 2006): 98; Charles Minott, *Martin Schongauer* (New York: Collectors Editions, 1971): 27.

concealed symbolism, contribute to the overall context and meaning of the piece.⁴¹ 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.⁴² Between 1483 and 1486, Leonardo completed his first painting of the *Virgin of the Rocks* (Plate 2.4), which is held in the Louvre.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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).⁴⁶ Blancus' work, through its triangular composition, thus evokes strong

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.

⁴² Simona Cremante, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Florence: Giunti, 2005): 69.

⁴³ Cremante, *Leonardo da Vinci*, 2005: 135.

⁴⁴ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961): 153.

⁴⁵ Diane DeGrazia Bohlin, *Paintings and related drawings by the Carracci family: a catalogue raisonné* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1979): 221.

⁴⁶ Javier Portús Pérez, *The Spanish Portrait: from El Greco to Picasso* (London: Scala, 2004): 93.

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.⁴⁷ 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,⁴⁸ 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."⁴⁹

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

⁴⁷ Annik Lavaure, *L'image de Joseph au Moyen Age*, Collection "Art and Société" (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013): 38-41.

⁴⁸ *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, 4:1. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993: 76.

⁴⁹ *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, 13.1. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993: 78-79.

Protoevangelium of James,⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ God, the Divine Artisan, is thus shown to be more proficient than 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, presents 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.”⁵² 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.⁵³

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.⁵⁴ The *Ludus Coventriae* (c. 1450-1500), for example, is 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 zonge

⁵⁰ Interestingly, the *Protoevangelium of James* indicates that Joseph was a successful building contractor. *Protoevangelium of James*, 9, 13. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993. James, “The Exceptional Role of St Joseph”, 2016: 98.

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

⁵² *Ma più mi giova in questo caso l’opinione di Sant’ Ambrosio, qual dice che San Giosef seppe molto bene, e esquisitamente, tanto l’arte del ferraro, quanto anco quella del legnaiuolo, e qual si voglia altra arte mecanica, perche era ingegnoso e industrioso altre modo.* Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 110. English translation taken from Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 153.

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

⁵⁵ James Orchard Halliwell, *Ludus Coventriae: A Collection of Mysteries, Formerly Represented at Coventry on the Feast of Corpus Christi* (London: Shakespeare Society, 1841): 96, 98. For a discussion of Joseph’s treatment in the play, see Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972): 163.

⁵⁶ Filas, *Joseph, the man closest to Jesus*, 1962: 524.

⁵⁷ Blow, *On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy*, 2015: 8.

⁵⁸ Taylor, “Heavenly Humility”, 1980: 45.

⁵⁹ Stanley Chojnacki, “Daughters and Oligarchs: Gender and the Early Renaissance State”, *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Judith C. Brown and Robert C. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2014): 75.

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 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.⁶³

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.⁶⁴ 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.”⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ In

⁶³ As another example, see Matt 13.55. Rosalba Manes, *The Melody of Silence: the testimony of Joseph of Nazareth* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Murialdo, 2014): 184.

⁶⁴ Filas, *Joseph and Jesus*, 1952: 26. The legal father is on par with the biological father in the rights and duties they hold over the child. See *The Navarre Bible: St Matthew’s Gospel*, 1988: 29.

⁶⁵ Pamela Sheingorn, “Joseph the Carpenter’s Failure at Familial Discipline”, *Insights and Interpretations: studies in celebration of the eighty-fifth anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002): 157.

⁶⁶ Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: pl. 33.

this work, clear similarities are identified between God the Father and Joseph.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸

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.⁶⁹ 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,

⁶⁷ Wilson, *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.

⁶⁸ This description of Joseph as “shadow of the Father” originated in the writing of François-Louis d'Argentan (*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, *Saint Joseph: The Father of Jesus in a Fatherless Society* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009): 104.

⁶⁹ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 130.

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

⁷⁰ Dzon, "Joseph and the Amazing Christ-Child", 2006: 148.

⁷¹ *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, 4:1. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993: 76.

⁷² *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, 5:1. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993: 76.

⁷³ *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, 5:1. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993: 76.

⁷⁴ An iconography of the Virgin Mary breastfeeding the infant Jesus.

Christ on her lap.⁷⁵ 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).⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ 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*

⁷⁵ Katharine Baetjer, *European Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Artists Born Before 1865: a summary catalogue* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995): 268-269.

⁷⁶ Baetjer, *European Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 1995: 269.

⁷⁷ Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 44.

faber, the Eternal Creator.⁷⁸ 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).⁷⁹

In his description of Joseph as a worker, Ambrose successfully connects the human and divine artisans.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ 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.⁸² 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.⁸³ 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

⁷⁸ Matt 13:55; Chorpenning, "The Enigma of St Joseph in Poussin's 'Holy Family on the Steps'", 1997: 277.

⁷⁹ J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 15, col. 1671. English translation taken from Cynthia Hahn, "Joseph as Ambrose's 'Artisan of the Soul' in *The Holy Family in Egypt* by Albrecht Durer", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 47, no. 4 (1984): 517.

⁸⁰ Hahn, "Joseph as Ambrose's 'Artisan of the Soul'", 1984: 517.

⁸¹ Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Divine Domesticity: Augustine of Thagaste to Teresa of Ávila* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997): 189.

⁸² Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 131.

⁸³ Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 7.

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.”⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵

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.”⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷ 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.⁸⁸ 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

⁸⁴ Dzon, “Joseph and the Amazing Christ-Child”, 2006: 152.

⁸⁵ Chorpenning, “St Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative”, 2011: 104.

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.

⁸⁷ An important literary source for this scene, and particularly of Mary sewing, is the fourteenth-century *Meditationes Vitae Christi*. In “a beautiful, loving and extremely compassionate meditation”, the author reflects on the life of the Holy Family during their sojourn in Egypt, concluding that Mary worked in sewing garments for her family and to sell to others. *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, trans. Francis X Taney, Anne Miller, and C. Mary Stallings-Taney (Asheville: Pegasus Press, 2000): 45. See also Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 176.

⁸⁸ Dzon, “Joseph and the Amazing Christ-Child”, 2006: 141.

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.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰

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

⁸⁹ Barbagallo, *St Joseph in Art*, 2014: 135.

⁹⁰ Colafranceschi, "San Giuseppe Educatore Nell'Iconografia", *Riscopriamo San Giuseppe* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Murialdo, 2008): 41; Zuffetti, *L'uomo dei sette silenzi*, 2012: 114.

productiveness bestows upon him a significant function.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:

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

[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.]"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."⁹³ Epiphanius explicitly denies Joseph's fatherhood in his *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."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.

⁹¹ The Holy Family, in this light, is cast as the origin of the Church.

⁹² Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 131-132.

⁹³ Filas, *Joseph and Jesus*, 1952: 32.

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

⁹⁵ John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of St John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople: on the Gospel of St Matthew, translated, with notes and indices*, trans. John Henry Parker. (Oxford: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1843): IV, 54.

⁹⁶ Filas, *Joseph, the man closest to Jesus*, 1962: 179.

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.

⁹⁸ Lienhard, "St Joseph in Early Christianity", 2011: 26.

⁹⁹ Augustine of Hippo, Sermon I, 51.B. *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*, vol. 1, trans. John Henry Parker (Oxford: J.G.F. and J. Rivington, 1844): 24.

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.¹⁰⁰ Thus, he occupies a true fatherhood of Jesus which does not violate the natural fatherhood belonging to the Eternal Father.¹⁰¹

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 *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 Gemignano.¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³

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."¹⁰⁴ 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

¹⁰⁰ Filas, *The Man Nearest to Christ*, 1944: 191.

¹⁰¹ Filas, *The Man Nearest to Christ*, 1944: 196.

¹⁰² The *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 Gemignano. 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, *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 *Meditationes Vitae Christi*", in *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.

¹⁰³ Joseph is an old man in the *Meditations*, but his old age is not for comic relief; instead, it evokes virtues of compassion, wisdom and moderation. See Black, *Creating the Cult of St Joseph*, 2006: 24-5; Muller, *Representations of Elderly People*: 50.

¹⁰⁴ Bolger Foster, *The Iconography of St Joseph*, 1978: 26.

cooperation in the work of Redemption.¹⁰⁵ It is evident that this description was responsible for the most significant and drastic change in Christian artistic representations of the Nativity.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.

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.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.

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, *St Bride and her book: Birgitta of Sweden's Revelations*, trans. Julia Bolton Holloway (Newburyport: Focus Information Group, 1992): 120, and Filas, *Joseph, the man closest to Jesus*, 1962: 514.

¹⁰⁶ Bolger Foster, *The Iconography of St Joseph*, 1978: 26. Bolger Foster notes that this change did not occur until around 1400.

¹⁰⁷ Chorpenning, *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.¹⁰⁸

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.¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰ 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).¹¹¹ In this way, 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, raccomandandoci con molto fervore san Francesco, e san Domenico, e tutti gli altri santi, solo perche 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

¹⁰⁸ Barbagallo, *St Joseph in Art*, 2014: 69.

¹⁰⁹ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 67.

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.

¹¹¹ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 86.

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 subjecting 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.

¹¹³ Augustine of Hippo, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2007: 252.

¹¹⁴ Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 169, col. 270; vol. 170, cols. 75-76, 78-79. English translation taken from Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 4.

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

¹¹⁵ Chara Armon, "Fatherhood and the Language of Delight in Fifteenth-Century Italian Texts", *Florence and Beyond: culture, society and politics and Renaissance Italy: essays in honour of John M. Najemy*, ed. David S. Peterson and Daniel E. Bornstein (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008): 216.

¹¹⁶ Gail McMurray Gibson, "The Thread of Life in the Hand of the Virgin", *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Bolton Holloway, Joan Bechtold & Constance S. Wright (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1990): 46. Several of the works previously discussed in this chapter have included the Virgin weaving or sewing.

¹¹⁷ McMurray Gibson, "The Thread of Life in the Hand of the Virgin", 1990: 48.

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.]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

¹¹⁸Chorpenning, *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

¹¹⁹ ...*la fonte del gli horti, e il pozzo di acqua viva, Gesù Christo, da cui petto scaturisce l’acqua, che sale fin’alla vita eterna, e in questa heredità del signore si trova il tesoro ascoso, per lo quale conviene che l’mercante dia tutto il suo avere....* Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 77. English translation taken from Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 133.

¹²⁰ *Questo divino tesoro e fonte sono di Giosef*. Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 77.

¹²¹ Stuard, “Burdens of Matrimony”, 1994: 62.

¹²² Francesco Barbaro, “On Wifely Duties”, *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, ed. Benjamin G. Kohl, Ronald G. Witt and Elizabeth B. Welles, trans. Benjamin G. Kohl (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978): 198, 202, 204, 208.

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.”¹²⁴ 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.¹²⁵ They are accompanied by the praying St Justina of Padua, a Christian martyr identified through her attribute of a sword piercing her breast.¹²⁶ 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”.¹²⁷ 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.¹²⁸ 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.¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ James, “The Exceptional Role of St Joseph”, 2016: 88.

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.

¹²⁷ Wilson, “Lorenzo Lotto”, 2007: 143.

¹²⁸ William R. Rearick and Terisio Pignatti, *The Art of Paolo Veronese, 1528-1588* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1988): 45.

¹²⁹ Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 52-53.

¹³⁰ Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 52.

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, piu ragione hà da essere chiamato Giosef 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.]¹³¹

Gracián continues with his description of Jesus being born and raised under the protection of Joseph, who was Mary's true husband.¹³² 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

¹³¹ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 78. English translation taken from Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 133-134.

¹³² Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 134.

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.

¹³⁴ 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).

¹³⁶ Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns*, trans. Kathleen E. McVey (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989): 111.

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?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 *Summary*. A prominent example is found in the *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.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.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."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

¹³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1947: IIIa, Q.31, art. 2, ad. 1.

¹³⁸ Kathryn Calley Galitz, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Masterpiece Paintings* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2016): 102-103.

¹³⁹ Meyer Schapiro, "A Note on the *Mérode Altarpiece*", *The Art Bulletin* 41 (4) (Dec. 1959): 327. The inclusion of a recognisable object relevant to the work's original audience enables the *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.

¹⁴⁰ Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 38, col. 1210. English translation taken from Cynthia Hahn, "'Joseph Will Perfect, Mary Enlighten and Jesus Save Thee': The Holy Family as Marriage Model in the *Mérode Triptych*", *The Art Bulletin* 68 (1) (Mar. 1986): 57.

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

¹⁴¹ Black, *Creating the Cult of St Joseph*, 2006: 24.

¹⁴² *Finalmente, può un'uomo fare verso un'altro tali opere, che quello gli habbia da restare con obligato tale, come se fosse suo padre*. Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 79. English translation taken from Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 134.

¹⁴³ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 134.

¹⁴⁴ *Lascio da parte l'altre opere buone, di' allenarlo, sostenerlo, accarezzarlo, e amarlo con piu suiscerato amore che alcun padre ma il suo figliuolo*. Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 79. English translation taken from Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 135.

¹⁴⁵ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 86-7.

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.

¹⁴⁶ *E tengo per cosa certissima, che se si ponesse in un bilancia tutto l’amore che li padri carnali hanno portato alli loro figliuoli, e nell’altra solo l’amore di Giosef vero Gesù, si troverebbe essere maggiore l’amore di Giosef.* Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 87; Black, *Creating the Cult of St Joseph*, 2006: 89.

¹⁴⁷ Filas, *Joseph, the man closest to Jesus*, 1962: 161.

¹⁴⁸ *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, 13:1. As cited by Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 1993: 79.

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.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!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.¹⁵¹ In this context, the maternal Joseph was often made

¹⁴⁹ Theresa Kenney, "The Manger as Calvary and Altar in the Middle English Nativity Lyric", *The Christ Child in Medieval Culture: Alpha es et O!*, ed. Mary Dzon and Theresa M. Kenney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012): 83.

¹⁵⁰ Bernardine of Siena, *Opera omnia*, vol. 7, Sermo II, Art. 2, cap. 2, 26. English translation taken from Armon, "Fatherhood and the Language of Delight", 2008: 216.

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.¹⁵² 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.¹⁵³

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.¹⁵⁴ 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.¹⁵⁵ 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.

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth L’Estrange, “*Deschi da parto* and Topsy-Turvy Gender Relations in Fifteenth-Century Italian Households”, in Elizabeth L’Estrange and Alison More, *Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011): 137.

¹⁵⁵ Francesca Alberti, “‘Divine Cuckolds’: Joseph and Vulcan in Renaissance Art and Literature”, *Cuckoldry, Impotence and Adultery in Europe (15th-17th century)*, ed. Sarah F. Matthews Grieco (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014): 150.

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.¹⁵⁶ 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).¹⁵⁷ 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

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.

¹⁵⁷ L. M. J. Delaissé, *A Century of Dutch Manuscript Illumination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 151.

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.¹⁵⁸ 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.¹⁵⁹ 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.¹⁶⁰ 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."¹⁶¹ 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.

¹⁶¹ Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: its origins and character*, vol. 2 (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958): 88.

Panofsky later revisits Broederlam's treatment of Joseph in his discussion of Campin's *Méroude 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 miracle 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.

¹⁶³ Herbert L. Kessler, "Joseph in Siena", *Joseph of Nazareth Through the Centuries*, ed. Joseph F. Chorpennig (Pennsylvania: St Joseph's University Press, 2011): 65.

¹⁶⁴ Drage Hale, "Joseph as Mother", 1996: 106.

¹⁶⁵ Drage Hale, "Joseph as Mother", 1996: 106, 107.

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.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷

Blancus' singling out of this scene as one of only six illustrated types in the *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 *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 *Summary*'s initial audience the dignity of physical labour and of Joseph's fatherhood.

¹⁶⁶ Black, *Early Modern Europe*, 2001: 117.

¹⁶⁷ In his *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, *Early Modern Europe*, 2001: 121.

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.