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

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CHAPTER THREE: JUST MAN

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

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

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

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

¹ Matthew uses *dikaios* nineteen times, compared to just two occurrences in Mark. See Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1997: 125.

² In Matthew’s Gospel, Joseph, Abel and Pilate are all afforded this term, though the last in an ironic sense (Matt 23:35; Matt 27:24). Additionally, Matt 13:17 and 23:29 refer to the prophets as “righteous men” seeking fulfilment, while Matt 13:44 and Matt 13:49, along with Matt 31:37,46, make reference to the salvation of the righteous. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1997: 125.

³ Brown (*The Birth of the Messiah*, 1997: 128) notes that according to rabbinic writings, a writ of repudiation had to be delivered before two witnesses, and therefore a divorce could not be entirely secret. Further, Joseph could not have hidden Mary’s shame indefinitely, as her pregnancy would sooner or later have become public knowledge. Brown indicates that Matthew’s wording most likely stresses that in divorcing Mary Joseph was not going to accuse her publicly of adultery and would thereby not subject her to trial. Additionally, Daniel J. Harrington S.J. argues that Joseph’s embarrassment and plans to divorce Mary “quietly” may indicate that he suspected she had been raped or seduced. See Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., “Matthew”, *Collegeville Biblical Commentary: New Testament*, Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. (ed.), (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992): 864.

is situated on the right and lowers her gaze towards Joseph's hand. The gazes of Mary and Joseph, along with their gestures and postures, effectively draws the eye in a circular movement around the composition. Jesus stands between them, his arms extended and his hands coming to rest on their shoulders; this gesture, along with the placement of the figures within an unidentifiable setting, casts this engraving as a parallel of the marriage scene in which the arms of God guide Mary and Joseph together. The unification of the three figures, as in the first engraving, creates a mandorla. The accompanying epigram reads *Vir iustus, puero a iusto, cum virgine iusta, celsa Ioseph tenuit culmina iusticiae*, "Joseph, the just man, attained the lofty heights of justice with the just Virgin by the just Child."

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

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

[We have at times already spoken, and will speak again, of the manner in which Mary and Joseph conversed exteriorly with Christ, and in a similar way with God interiorly in their hearts. They would hold the Child Jesus in the middle of them, and their souls would be like two Seraphim, in the middle of which was the throne of God . . . No creature came into closer contact with Christ, accompanied him, or enjoyed his presence more than Mary and Joseph. In no one is found the faith, prayer, mortification, piety, the imitation of Christ, and the charity which Mary and Joseph had. Therefore, it is certain that no creature had enjoyed greater union with God than that which was experienced by Mary and Joseph.]⁴

Additionally, Gracián notes:

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

⁴ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 159.

[St Joseph had God Himself as his son, and Jesus and the Virgin Mary close, with whom he interacted constantly and from whom he learned the uprightness of justice.]⁵

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

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

St Albert the Great focuses on the two words used in Scripture to describe Joseph: “just man” (Matt 1:19). According to Albert, these two words prove that all virtues are found in Joseph. Joseph is called “man”, Albert says, because he was constant. Constancy encompasses fortitude, confidence in God, magnanimity, perseverance, and all the other noble virtues that perfect the soul. “Just” means that Joseph is faithful. If he is faithful to God, he is perfect in faith and in divine love. If he is faithful to his neighbour, Joseph is perfect in charity and in justice, which are the source of all virtues that concern the neighbour.⁶

Gracián continues in describing Joseph as the aggregate of all virtues. He explains that justice is the highest virtue, from which springs the virtues comprising constancy and faithfulness.⁷ This chapter will demonstrate, through its analysis of the text, engraving and epigram of Book III, how Joseph is interpreted as the embodiment of these virtues of fortitude and perseverance, confidence in and faithfulness to God, and magnanimity and faithfulness to others, and thereby how he is presented as ‘the aggregate of all virtues’: a just man.

Matthew 1:19 openly connects Joseph’s justice with his decision to divorce Mary without scandal or public attention. Divorce was, most likely, the only conceivable option available to him. During the period, in which preservation of reputation and honour was of utmost importance, he would have been justified in divorcing Mary if he suspected her of adultery,

⁵ Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 115.

⁶ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 161.

⁷ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 169.

and possibly even expected to do so publicly.⁸ Divorce proceedings were carried out on the male's initiative and accompanied by public procedure and trial.⁹ If a man and woman were found to have committed adultery, both were condemned to death in accordance with the Book of Deuteronomy (22:22-24). We thus see a conflict in the just Joseph: a desire to uphold the doctrine of the law, but at the same time a motivation, arguably by mercy, to adhere to the law in a way which would cause Mary minimal shame.

Tarcisio Stramare notes that the term "just" exists in a relationship of "mutual interdependence" with Joseph's decision to renounce Mary, and with the knowledge he has of the mystery.¹⁰ It can thus be proposed that Matthew's terming of Joseph as "just" is not at all coincidental or casual, but intended to expose and establish connections between humble figures of the Old and New Testament who surrendered themselves completely to the will of God.¹¹

An interpretation of Joseph's title "just man" is also found in the writings of Saint John Chrysostom, to whom Gracián gives significant reference. Chrysostom's interpretation of the title "just man" is insightful and unusual for its length, although he does not regard the marriage of Joseph and Mary as true.¹² He writes in his fourth homily on the Gospel of Matthew:

‘Joseph, her husband, being a just man’. By ‘a just man’ in this place he means him that is virtuous in all things. For both freedom from covetousness is justice, and universal virtue is also justice; and it is mostly in this latter sense that the Scripture uses the name of justice...Being then ‘just’, that is a just man’, that is good and considerate, ‘he was minded to put her away privily.’...For so far from punishing, he was not minded even to make an example of her. Seest thou a man under self-restraint and freed from the most tyrannical of passions...He was so free from passion as to be unwilling to grieve the Virgin even in the least matters.¹³

⁸ Matthew J. Marohl, *Joseph's Dilemma: Honour Killing in the Birth Narrative of Matthew* (Cambridge: James Clark & Co., 2010): 26.

⁹ Harrington, "Matthew", 1992: 864.

¹⁰ Tarcisio Stramare (O.S.J.), "Son of Joseph from Nazareth: Problems Concerning Jesus' Infancy", Larry M. Toschi, O.S.J. (trans.), *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, vol XXVI (1), January – June 1978: 50.

¹¹ Matthew's term "dikaios" was typically used in connection with the Old Testament people of faith who longed for the fulfilment of the Messianic promise, and with the disciples who have received the promise of salvation. The term is used in connection to God Himself, His chosen people, and to specific individuals including Noah, who does everything commanded him by God (Gen 6:9, 7:1), Tamar, who disguises herself as a prostitute in order to bear a child in Judah's line (Gen 38:26), and King David, who spares the life of Saul (1 Sam 24:17). In his study of Joseph's title as an upright man, Brown notes that Matthew's genealogy names four women, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, who acted as preparation for Mary's role in the begetting of the Messiah. In two of these instances, however, the man involved was not upright (in fact, in Gen 38:26 Judah exclaims that "Tamar is more upright than I"). This contrasts with the parents of Jesus, who are both identified as "models of virtue". See Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1997: 125; Toschi, *Joseph in the New Testament*, 1991: 447.

¹² Filas, *Joseph, the man closest to Jesus*, 1962: 383. Due to the limitations and scope of this paper, this subject will not be discussed in further detail.

¹³ John Chrysostom, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Volume X: St John Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St Matthew, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Cosimo, 2007): 23.

Thus, according to Chrysostom, Joseph's justice does not simply indicate that he is righteous or honest, but that he is virtuous in every sense; there are several instances in Scripture where this virtue is revealed. Joseph's decision to quietly separate from Mary after her pregnancy is discovered indicates his sensitivity and faithfulness to God's law, to the sanctity of marriage, and to Mary's reputation. He does, however, need the directive of the angel to pursue his marriage to Mary, and even in this instance his virtue is apparent: he does not question, but rises from sleep and acts immediately. In taking Mary as his wife, he accepts Jesus as his son, even though he may not understand exactly the origins of the child or the meaning of doing so. Edward Healy Thompson argues that it is from Joseph's righteousness that he is given the ability to act out of the three theological virtues: walking in faith in the presence of God, expecting the Messiah with hope, and striving to the best of his ability to make Christ loved by others.¹⁴ Gracián references this interpretation in his argument that Joseph exhibits the summit of all virtues in that he does not want to offend, neither God nor others, by word, deed, or thought.¹⁵ He does not challenge, contradict, or question, but is silent and listens. In this way, he can be seen to fulfil the masculine convention of silence and stoicism, which communicated the idea that men should not reveal their true nature or thought.¹⁶

Saint Thomas Aquinas also expounds upon Joseph's justice; in several of his writings, he examines the virtue of justice as well as its components. His *Catena* on Matt 1:1-19 bears reference to Chrysostom's argument that the term "just" meant that Joseph was virtuous in all ways, and further, his *Catena* on Luke 2:4-5 quotes St Ambrose, who stressed that Joseph was the just man "who kept the word."¹⁷ In his review of Joseph's justice, Aquinas attributes to him several virtues:

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

¹⁴ Thompson, *The Life and Glories of St Joseph*, 2013: 90.

¹⁵ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 87.

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

¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, collected out of the Works of the Fathers, vol. I: St Matthew*. trans. Mark Pattison (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842): 45; Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, collected out of the Works of the Fathers, vol. III – part I: St Luke*, trans. John Henry Newman (New York: Cosimo, 2007): 65.

4. Veracity, or truthfulness, which is demonstrated by a person's life or conversation;
5. Liberality or poverty, shown through Joseph and Mary's virginity and their giving of the offering of the poor;
6. Virginity itself.¹⁸

Like Thomas, Albert the Great asserts that Joseph's title of "just" communicates his faithfulness to God and neighbour, and ultimately his charity and justice, the source of all virtues concerning the neighbour.¹⁹ Therefore, he stresses that through this title of "just man" Joseph is seen to possess all moral and theological virtues. This view finds an expression in the epigram accompanying the engraving for Book III, which states that Joseph attained the "lofty heights" of justice and thereby indicates that he possessed the highest quality of this virtue.

The fortitude of Joseph

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

Blancus visualises Joseph's fortitude in his engraving through his depiction of the saint's physical strength. Joseph wears a short tunic, which exposes his muscular legs, as well as a cape, the edge of which falls over his arm. In his right hand, he firmly holds a staff, its angled, strong line creating a vector directing the viewer's eye inward from the work's border to Joseph's face. Gracián directly communicates Joseph's fortitude, along with his other virtues, in his description of Joseph as the "last stone" above which is placed the cornerstone of the building and of the Church: Jesus.²⁰ He continues:

y sumaron todas las perfecciones de los padres antiguos, y se hallaron recogidas las virtudes de todos ellos: la fe de Abraham, confianza de Isaac, charidad de Jacob, castidad de Iosef, mansedumbre de Moisés, fortaleza de Gideon, spiritu de Elias, devocion de David, y todas las demas excelencias de los otros padres.

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

¹⁸ James J. Davis, "A Thomistic Josephology, Chapter IX: The Holiness, Virtues and Gifts of St Joseph", *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, vol XIII (2), July-December 1965: 292-295.

¹⁹ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 161.

²⁰ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 147.

chastity of Joseph, the meekness of Moses, the fortitude of Gideon, the spirit of Elijah, the devotion of David, and all the excellences of the other fathers.]²¹

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

The cardinal virtues of fortitude, justice, prudence and temperance were a prominent feature of ancient and medieval discussion and thought. In his *Politics*, Aristotle indicates that while women do possess moral virtues, particularly fortitude, justice and temperance, they possess them only menially (*virtutes ministrative*) and insofar as they help them complete their servile tasks.²² In contrast, the moral virtues of a man enable them to fulfil roles of domestic and political leadership (*virtutes principative*).²³ Building on Aristotle, Ambrose emphasised that fortitude comprised not only military prowess, as demonstrated by Old Testament figures such as David, but also mental strength, which he stressed is upheld by priests and to a perfect degree by martyrs.²⁴ He describes fortitude as that which "wages an inexorable war on all vice, undeterred by toil, brave in face of dangers, steeled against pleasures, unyielding to lusts, avoiding covetousness as a deformity that weakens virtue", but his use of a similar description in connection with other vices leads to the view that he does not regard fortitude as a special virtue.²⁵ A different approach is seen in the writings of Augustine: he does not approach the virtues as an exegetical matter, but as a means by which the soul is freed from earthly entrapments in order to cling to God.²⁶ Fortitude is here emphasised as strength in the face of great force or adversity that may prevent a person from reaching God.²⁷ According to Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*, this is visualised in martyrdom, the primary act of fortitude, which embodies waging a personal war on behalf of God, even one which is not dedicated to the pursuit of the common good.²⁸

²¹ Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 112.

²² Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Dover Publications, 2000): 51.

²³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 2000: 51.

²⁴ István P. Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages: a study in moral thought from the fourth to the fifteenth century* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2011): 17.

²⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1947: IIa-IIæ, Q.123, art. 2.

²⁶ Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages*, 2011: 23.

²⁷ Martin Jacobsson, *Aurelius Augustinus, De musica liber VI: a critical edition with a translation and introduction* (Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002): 109.

²⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1947: IIa-IIæ, Q.123, art. 5.

Although the theological and cardinal virtues and other esteemed female attributes, such as Prudence, Wisdom and Modesty, were linguistically gendered as female in the vernacular,²⁹ the virtues of Fortitude and Justice were socially gendered as male.³⁰ In art, Fortitude was traditionally visualised as female with masculine attributes, seemingly resulting from Latin's feminisation of abstract qualities. Prominent examples of this are found in Giotto's 1305 fresco for the Scrovegni chapel (Plate 3.1), in which Fortitude stands dressed in armour and behind a raised shield, prepared for attack, and Sandro Botticelli's painting for the Tribunale della Mercanzia (Plate 3.2), completed in 1470 and now housed in the Uffizi Gallery, which depicts an armour-clad, enthroned and pensive Fortitude.³¹ This traditional visualisation of Fortitude as female was contradicted by Nicola Pisano, who in 1250 included a sculpture of the virtue in his Pisa Baptistery pulpit (Plate 3.3).³² It has been speculated that Nicola's depiction of a heroic male nude in the Classical style is founded on a depiction of Hercules from a Roman sarcophagus, or on the figure of Hippolytus included in a Campo Santo sarcophagus.³³ Here, the female Fortitude, who often is shown carrying a club, wearing a lion skin, or demonstrating another attribute of strength, is substituted for an idealised male nude, standing in *contrapposto* stance and supporting a lion on his shoulder. The masculinised, virile Fortitude encourages a more natural association of this virtue with military conduct, which was an exclusively male pursuit, and directly symbolised the warrior class.³⁴ Perhaps this gender shift encouraged Fortitude to appeal easily to masculine audiences, who would arguably have more readily identified with a male Fortitude than a female one.

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

²⁹ They were stylised as Prudenzia, Sapienza and Modesta.

³⁰ Sharon T. Strocchia, "Naming a Nun: Spiritual Exemplars and Corporate Identity in Florentine Convents, 1450-1530", *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 223.

³¹ For Giotto's fresco, see Claudio Bellinati, *Giotto: Iconographic Atlas of the Scrovegni Chapel, 1300-1305* (Ponzano: Grafiche Vianello, 2003): 132. For Botticelli's panel, see Fossi, *Galleria degli Uffizi*, 2001: 258-259.

³² Francis Arnes Lewis, *Tuscan Marble Carving, 1250-1350: Sculpture and Civic Pride* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1997): 61.

³³ Preston W. Bautista, *Manifesting Masculinities in Central Italian Renaissance Art: Artistic Theory and Representations of the Male Body* (New York: The City University of New York, 2008): 45.

³⁴ Claire Richter Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 73.

³⁵ Lienhard, "St Joseph in Early Christianity", 2011: 16.

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

A particularly strong example of fortitude in the lives of the saints is found in the story of Mark the Evangelist. Tradition indicates that Mark, who was not an Apostle but a companion of Paul and Barnabas and later a disciple of Peter's who accompanied him to Rome, preached and converted many souls in Alexandria and was ultimately imprisoned and dragged through the streets to his death.³⁶ In the *Golden Legend*, Jacobus de Voragine describes Mark as the "heavy hammer that breaks down the iron...strikes down the perfidy of the heretics, rings out the praises of God, and strengthens the Church."³⁷ In these words, de Voragine combines the quintessential elements of virtue and fortitude, which in turn indicates masculine strength. Mark *is* the hammer, the heavy instrument which is, through perseverance, able to break something seemingly impenetrable. Conveying him in this way brings his masculine power to the fore. Mark, by his strength, is able to break down heresies, proclaim God's praises, and fortify the Church; attributes which emphasise the conventional and even prized masculine qualities of physical power, stability, and endurance.

De Voragine continues his account by explaining that Mark amputated his thumb so that he could not be made a priest, but "this rash act neither unmanned Mark nor prevented Peter from ordaining him bishop."³⁸ It is important to note de Voragine's description of Mark not having been "unmanned" by such an action; in fact, his ordaining as bishop by Peter indicates that he possesses masculine qualities, such as leadership, in abundance. Artistic representation of Mark also sought to convey his masculine traits. A prominent example of this is Donatello's *Saint Mark* (Plate 3.4) which was created between 1411 and 1413 for a niche in the façade of the Orsanmichele church in Florence.³⁹ Standing at almost eight feet high and viewed from below, the bearded Mark gazes away from the viewer, a book held upon his left hip. The saint's power and masculinity is conveyed by his strong brow and facial features, his large left hand, with the pulsing veins clearly visible, and his natural *contrapposto* stance. He appears almost to step out of the niche, the intensity of his expression and his powerful features conveying his authority and indicating his virtue. These depictions of Mark distinctly contrast against the

³⁶ Kiely, *Blessed and Beautiful*, 2010: 110.

³⁷ De Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 2012: 243.

³⁸ Kiely, *Blessed and Beautiful*, 2010: 111.

³⁹ Robert Munman, "Optical Corrections in the Sculpture of Donatello", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 75 (2), 1985: 63, pl. 5.

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

That said, a prominent representation of Joseph's fortitude is found in Michelangelo's *Madonna and Child with St Joseph and John the Baptist* (c. 1507), which is more commonly known as the *Doni Tondo* (Plate 3.5) and is housed in the Uffizi Gallery.⁴⁰ At its heart, this scene conveys a naturalism which emphasises not only the humanity of Christ, a lively boy who climbs on the shoulders of his parents, but also the parental qualities and strength of both Mary and Joseph. Michelangelo depicts an athletic-looking Mary, seated on the ground in the pose of a Madonna of Humility⁴¹ and between the legs of Joseph, looking up at the Christ Child who is climbing upon her shoulder and who rests his hands on her head.⁴² She supports the child with both hands, her powerful biceps and forearms given strong emphasis. Joseph looks at Jesus, who appears to be standing on Joseph's knee. The power and movement conveyed in these figures, through their physiques, gestures and gazes, encourages the audience's focus to easily flow across the work.

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

⁴⁰ Gloria Fossi, *Michelangelo: Doni Tondo* (Florence: Giunti, 2009): 6.

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

⁴² Regina Stefaniak, *Mysterium Magnum: Michelangelo's Tondo Doni* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008): 1.

⁴³ Black, *Creating the Cult of St Joseph*, 2006: 25.

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

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

Joseph's exercise of fortitude also finds an expression in representations which present him as Mary's protector or "champion", thereby illustrating his justice and unwillingness, as recorded in Scripture, to expose Mary to shame, ridicule or pain. A prominent reference of this virtue is demonstrated in Federico Barocci's fresco of the Holy Family, completed between 1561 and 1563 and located at the centre of the ceiling of the Casino of Pius IV in the Vatican (Plate 3.6).⁴⁴ Elizabeth presents the infant Baptist to the seated Madonna and Child, above whom an angel hovers, while a male figure observes from the background and another gazes out towards the viewer by the right of the work.⁴⁵ In a posture which can be viewed as protective, Joseph stands by the right edge of the work, his body turned towards Mary and Jesus while he gazes out at the viewer over his left shoulder. He wears a robe which is draped over, but does not conceal, his muscular frame. His physique leaves no doubt for the viewer as to the extent of his strength and powerfully works to assert his masculinity and his authority. His outstretched left arm, with its muscles almost palpitating, holds the staff, a gesture which directs the eye to Mary, Jesus, and an angel depicted in the centre. Thus, Barocci's Joseph is the means by which

⁴⁴ Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: pl. 73. Wilson is the first scholar to have discussed this painting in terms of its focus on Joseph.

⁴⁵ Wilson presents quite a convincing argument that the standing male figure is Joseph (see especially *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2011: 80, 81-82). While this thesis works in keeping with Wilson's approach, it acknowledges the argument of other scholars that this figure is in fact Zachariah, the husband of Mary's cousin Elizabeth. See particularly the recent work on Barocci: *Federico Barocci: Inspiration and Innovation in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Judith W. Mann (New York: Routledge, 2017).

the viewer accesses the Virgin and Child. This is paralleled in Blancus' etching, with Joseph's powerful upward gaze to Jesus, his placement at the left edge of the composition and his gesture towards Mary all working to draw the viewer's focus to Mary and Jesus.

Barocci's Joseph rests his right hand upon a column, a traditional attribute of fortitude and perhaps also a reference to his masculine traits of constancy and stability, to the strength of the Jewish Law, to which Scripture indicates he strives to adhere, and to the power of his Davidic ancestry. The fact that Joseph is leaning on this column can thus be taken as a representation of the justice he demonstrates in upholding obedience to the Law and to the will of God, yet also paying close attention to his conscience. The column is partly concealed by a drawn curtain⁴⁶ which can be perceived as a reference to the successful concealment of the mystery of the Incarnation which is achieved through Joseph's taking of Mary as his wife, even though she was carrying a child not his own. A dog plays at his feet, perhaps representing the righteousness and fidelity Joseph showed towards Mary, first in striving to spare her from trial and punishment and second in providing her and Jesus with protection by taking her as his wife. The physically strong Joseph of the *Summary* is placed on the same level as Mary within the composition, and this depiction, in conjunction with his gesture towards her, encourages a visual relationship between the two figures. These compositional elements combine to further emphasise the fortitude Joseph embodies as Mary's protector and as the head of the family unit.

Joseph's confidence in God

Joseph's faithfulness and confidence in God is depicted in Blancus' engraving and in Morale's epigram. Joseph is shown seated beneath Jesus and looking up at the Child, while Jesus' hands rest on the shoulders of Joseph and Mary. The direction of Joseph's gaze to Jesus, the Messiah through whom comes redemption for Israel, visualises Gracián's reference to Saint Jerome where he argues that Joseph can be called "just" because, in the same way as the Old Testament Fathers, he participates in faith and devotion to the promised Messiah.⁴⁷ Gracián stresses that Joseph, however, is even greater than these, as "he saw with his own eyes the salvation of Israel, and the light of revelation to the Gentiles."⁴⁸ Blancus' depiction of Joseph's eyes fixed on Jesus is a conceivable allusion to these words, communicating a deep relationship shared

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

⁴⁷ Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 112.

⁴⁸ *...vio con sus ojos la salud de Israel, y lumbre para revelacion de las gentes....* Gracián, *Sumario*, 1597: 113.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁹ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 155.

⁵⁰ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 155.

was ready to give up Mary in accordance with what he believed to be God's will, and the Navarre commentary on the Gospel of Matthew goes further in indicating that Joseph knew Mary to be a holy woman and so her pregnancy ultimately left him with a situation he could not explain.⁵¹ His justice appears to spark in him a conflict between the law and his own conscience; while he clearly values the law, he does not accept it without consideration of his own conscience and of the primary placement of God's will in his decision-making. Particular scholars, such as Michael Griffin, have drawn typological connections between Joseph's surrendering of Mary and Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in accordance with divine command.⁵² In both instances, Griffin states, God intervened at the appropriate time to help the weakness of His servant and bestows upon both Abraham and Joseph the name of "father".⁵³ While, as established in this work's previous chapter, the *Summary* represents Joseph as the head of the Holy Family, he is also portrayed as open and submissive to the will of God by his focus on Jesus at the centre of his life. Additionally, the inclusion of the mandorla once more delineates the presence of a sacred space which effectively unifies heaven and earth, God and man, thus communicating the depth of relationship Mary and Joseph shared with Jesus in their hearts.

Respect or awe for God's plan of salvation, and its role in the life of Joseph, was addressed by the ancient writers Eusebius, Ephrem and Theophylact.⁵⁴ "Fear of the Lord" is consistently referenced in the Jewish scriptures, and the argument that Joseph's reluctance to take Mary as his wife resulted directly from his reverence for God and from his knowledge that she was the woman chosen by God as the bearer of the Christ calls this to mind. This view, however, is not without its own problems.⁵⁵ In *Redemptoris Custos*, Pope St John Paul II writes that as a "just man", Joseph did not know how to treat Mary's "astonishing" motherhood: while he tries to answer the unnerving question of her pregnancy, he ultimately seeks a way out of what is for him a difficult situation.⁵⁶ In taking Mary as his wife, he acts in the clearest "obedience of

⁵¹ *The Navarre Bible: St Matthew's Gospel*, 1988: 30.

⁵² Michael D. Griffin, "Saint Joseph", *Cahiers de Joséphologie*, vol. XX (2), July-December 1972: 229.

⁵³ Griffin, "Saint Joseph", 1972: 230. Abraham is a "father in faith", promised the legacy of many descendants by God (Gen 17:5-8), while upon Joseph, as we know, is bestowed the title "father of Jesus".

⁵⁴ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1997: 126.

⁵⁵ It does not address how Joseph would have acquired the knowledge of Mary's pregnancy and of its divine origins before he was commanded by the angel to take Mary as his wife (Matt 1:20). Raymond E. Brown also indicates that if Joseph did have knowledge of Mary's pregnancy, he would naturally have received instruction to take Mary into his home and solemnise the marriage, leaving no reason for him to question the conception of Jesus. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1997: 126.

⁵⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 1989: section I, paragraph 3.

faith”, accepting “as truth coming from God the very thing that she had already accepted at the Annunciation”.⁵⁷

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

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

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

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

⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 1989: section II, paragraph 4.

⁵⁸ Augustine, Sermon 1. *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, ed. Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe (New York: Paulist Press, 1952): 34.

⁵⁹ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 82.

⁶⁰ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 82.

⁶¹ Chorpenning, *Just Man*, 1993: 82-3.

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

Joseph's charity

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

⁶² Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: pl. 51.

⁶³ Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 61.

⁶⁴ The compass may also be taken to represent his role as archetype of God the Creator. See Wilson, *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art*, 2001: 61.

⁶⁵ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 149-150.

In his discussion of Joseph's magnanimity, Gracián turns to the writings of Origen, who stressed that Joseph's decision to leave Mary after discovering her pregnancy was because he knew he was outside this "mystery of greatest virtue", deeming himself unworthy to be in her company, and thus expressing a deep humility and righteousness.⁶⁶ In continuation of this argument, Gracián emphasises that Joseph, who knew his wife was pure and virtuous, and who knew the Spirit, decided to leave her not out of fear or doubt, but out of reverence and respect for her and for God.⁶⁷ This perception seeks to emphasise Joseph's charity and humility; he is motivated not by a desire for self-preservation, but by a deep respect for Mary's dignity. The body language of Blancus' Joseph communicates this powerfully. Joseph's gesture towards Mary not only directs the eye to her, but also communicates an element of respect and esteem. Joseph is shown to clearly value Mary and recognise her virtue, and as the epigram states it is with her, "the just Virgin", that he attains through Jesus "the lofty heights of justice".

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

The focus of Joseph's gaze and gesture away from the spectator and towards Jesus and Mary functions in accordance with the traditional visual depiction of Charity. In accordance with the other theological virtues, Charity is often rendered as female. She is frequently surrounded by young children and infants who cling to her or nurse at her breast. Unlike Fortitude, depictions of Charity tend to show her gaze focused not on the viewer but on the children she nurtures. This is well-demonstrated in Cecchino del Salviati's *Charity* (Plate 3.8), completed between 1543 and 1545 and held in the Uffizi Gallery collection.⁶⁸ The panel depicts a centralised kneeling woman dressed in elaborate robes and surrounded by three children, all of whom cling to her. Her arms loosely encircle the children beneath her, emphasising a quality of protectiveness, while her fixed gaze towards the smiling child at her right shoulder indicates

⁶⁶ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 132.

⁶⁷ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 132.

⁶⁸ Fossi, *Galleria degli Uffizi*, 2001: 448-449.

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

While visual representations of Joseph's justice, though not particularly common, most often centre on his physical strength and power, there are artworks which do emphasise his virtues of charity and faithfulness to others. This is shown in Simone Martini's unusual depiction⁶⁹ of *Christ Returning to His Parents* (Plate 3.9), completed in 1342 and housed in the Walker Gallery in Liverpool.⁷⁰ In a particularly powerful and emotive composition, Martini depicts Mary and Joseph's encounter with Jesus after finding him in the Temple in Jerusalem. Through his detailed attention to gaze and gesture, the artist has visualised with striking realism the middle of a family quarrel.⁷¹ Mary's low, seated position emphasises her humility as she looks and gestures towards Jesus, a book open on her lap.⁷² The boy Jesus and Joseph stand before her. Jesus' stance and expression is one of very real defiance; his eyes are narrowed, his expression stern and his arms crossed, holding a closed book to his chest. Martini has represented Joseph here as somewhat of a "middle-man"; he stands between Mary and Jesus and looks down towards the boy, one hand on his shoulder, while gesturing towards Mary with the other. He is not shown admonishing the child, but tenderly reasoning with him to listen to his mother. Joseph's centralised placement, as well as his gaze and gesture, communicates his stability, charity and virtue. Joseph's placement at the scene's apex casts him as the authoritative figure within the family unit, possessing the right to govern and direct Mary and Jesus in accordance with his roles as husband and father. Martini's inclusion of a pyramidal structure conveys similarity with Blancus' engraving, as in both instances the gaze and body language of the central figure leads the viewer's eye to the figures at the edges of the frame.

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

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

⁷⁰ Andrew Martindale, *Simone Martini: Complete Edition* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1988): 149.

⁷¹ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 1988: 49.

⁷² In fact, Mary has the book open to an abbreviation of her words in Luke 2:48, "Son, why have you dealt with us thus?" See Christopher Kleinhenz's *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, 2004: 690.

upwards at Jesus and speaking while gesturing to Mary indicates his faithfulness to her, a quality which is also seen in Martini's visualisation of Joseph reasoning with Jesus. Martini's Joseph places his hand on Jesus' shoulder in a display of affection, reassurance and understanding. While the boy Jesus communicates strong emotional dominance in his closed body language and hostile expression, it is Joseph, through his central placement and occupation of the compositional apex, who holds power. Similarly, while Blancus' Joseph is seated and does not occupy the compositional apex, his communication with Jesus and Mary through gesture and gaze shows his authority. In this way, both Martini and Blancus represent Joseph as conveying appropriate familial authority, as a father who is able to reason with his child, and as a model of charity and respect within the family unit.

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

⁷³ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 187.

⁷⁴ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 187.

⁷⁵ Gracián, *Sommario*, 1597: 188, 189.