

the anawim

R064-dL

by jeff liautaud (in black with Catholic News Agency excerpts in blue)

Mary and Joseph by name.

*Turned down at the Inn, a humble, poor couple,
Mary and Joseph by name.*

Came their child, Jesus by name.

*Born in a cave, the world nary the same,
Jesus by name.*

Their whole lives gave witness. My whole life is to give witness. We are the anawim.

Excerpts from an article by Sr. Joan L. Roccasalvo, C.S.J. (with permission to JL by JD Flynn 2/11/2020)

“Yet, protesters complain that their sensibilities are offended by honoring Jesus Christ, if not as God, then certainly as the greatest of all anawim. The anawim of the Old Testament were the poor of every sort: the vulnerable, the marginalized, and socio-economically oppressed, those of lowly status without earthly power. In fact, they depended totally on God for whatever they owned. The Hebrew word anawim (inwetan) means those who are bowed down.

“Mahatma Gandhi understood inwetan as the way of bhakti, that is, loving devotion and surrender to God. In times of suffering, the anawim remained faithful and awaited the good things of the Lord to fill their emptiness, as the Lucan gospel tells us in (Lk 1:53). They delighted in the Lord because they were rooted in him.

“Mary of Nazareth belonged to the anawim. Her life of fidelity had singled her out for a special role in God’s salvific plan. She was already betrothed to Joseph, and when God’s plan was put to her, quite naturally, she asked how it would happen. Mary’s free acceptance allowed the Spirit to work in her. In proclaiming her Magnificat, she acknowledged that the Almighty has done great things for her in her lowliness in contrast to God’s dealings with the proud (Lk 1:47)...

“Like Mary, Joseph of Nazareth also belonged to the anawim. In a dream, he experienced his own annunciation in which he responded to God’s

mandate and assumed his role in salvation-history (Mt1:18-25). Joseph was deeply troubled that Mary’s child was not his. He had no foreknowledge of Mary’s Annunciation, no foreknowledge of Mary’s divine pregnancy. He had to be told. Like Joseph of the Old Testament, through a dream, he was asked to entrust his future entirely to God. He understood that by divine choice, he would be the child’s earthly father, assuming responsibility both for legitimizing the child and for naming him. Like Mary, Joseph trusted in God’s providential care.”

To think that Joseph did not teach the child is beyond question. His most important job would be to teach the child. Joseph was a most righteous man, Good News Translation (“GNT”).

Matthew 1:19 Joseph was a man who always did what was right.

All powerful God would have given Jesus a full time, committed, acting father.

Luke 23:50 And behold, there was a man named Joseph who was a counselor, a good and a just man.

You never hear Joseph complain to God. He just acted. The anawim are committed, acting people.

Luke 2:22 The time came for Joseph and Mary to perform the ceremony of purification, as the Law of Moses commanded. So they took the child to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord,

Luke 2:42 When Jesus was twelve years old, they went to the festival as usual.

If you pray for another, you believe in intercessory prayer. Asking St. Joseph to pray for us is like Acts.

Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in jail, but the people of the church were praying earnestly to God for him.

St. Joseph is intercessor and Patron Saint of the Worker, of Families, of the Dying, and of protection of the Universal Church, continuing even from heaven. A spirituality of total dependence on God for all that you possess brings unity for all. Tradition has it that Joseph died in the arms of Jesus and Mary. That is why he is Patron of the Dying.

Isaiah 57:2 Those who live good lives find peace and rest in death.

Sr. Joan continues: “Mary shines among the anawim about whom Jesus later speaks in the Sermon on the Mount. She is the first model of discipleship in the New Testament.”

The Sermon on the Mount (GNT)

Matthew 5:1-11

1. Jesus saw the crowds and went up a hill, where he sat down. His disciples gathered around him,

2. and he began to teach them:
3. “Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!”
4. “Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!”
5. “Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised!”
6. “Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully!”
7. “Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them!”
8. “Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God!”
9. “Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children!”
10. “Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!”
11. “Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers.”
12. “Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted.”

Sr. Joan continues: “It seems to me that since the Fall—
without even thinking it odd
that man had no trouble at all believing that he can be God.
How he would do this I cannot conceive ...
tho, he certainly thinks he can—
and yet, he cannot bring himself to believe that God can become ... a Man.

“In his epistle to the Philippians 2:6-7, St. Paul tells us that Jesus emptied himself taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. The phrase, “he emptied himself” refers in the first place to the Incarnation. Jesus’ kenosis means that he who emptied himself freely chose to deprive himself of something he already possessed. A person who makes himself empty gives up his wealth and becomes poor. St. Francis of Assisi is one famous example of this. Jesus did this so that by his poverty, “(we) might become rich” (2 Cor 8:1-9). He entered into the condition of the powerless anawim, but he did not de-divinize himself of his Godhead. He made himself at one with the poor by becoming absolutely poor.

“Jesus emptied himself as love (agape) in order to redeem humanity through kenosis. Agape led to kenosis, and kenosis, to glory. Love was the only reason for his incarnation, his passion, death, and resurrection.

“As model parents, Mary and Joseph raised Jesus in the spirit of the anawim.

“He preached with moral authority instead of with temporal power, and the Sermon on the Mount makes the ultimate counter-cultural statement. Gandhi himself treasured the beatitudes as the core of his teaching, and it is said that he took a copy of them wherever he went.”

Sr. Joan L. Roccalalvo, a member of the Congregation of St. Joseph, Brentwood, NY, holds degrees in philosophy (Ph.L), musicology (Ph.D.), theology (M.A.), and liturgical studies (Ph.D).

More scripture about the Anawim (GNT)

Psalms 9:18 The needy will not always be neglected; the hope of the poor will not be crushed forever.

Psalms 10:17 You will listen, O LORD, to the prayers of the lowly; you will give them courage.

Psalms 22:26 The poor will eat as much as they want; those who come to the LORD will praise him. May they prosper forever!

Psalms 25:9 He leads the humble in the right way and teaches them his will.

Psalms 37:11 But the humble will possess the land and enjoy prosperity and peace.

Proverbs 3:34 He has no use for conceited people, but shows favor to those who are humble.

Isaiah 29:19 Poor and humble people will once again find the happiness which the LORD, the holy God of Israel, gives.

Isaiah 61:1 The Sovereign LORD has filled me with his Spirit. He has chosen me and sent me To bring good news to the poor, To heal the broken-hearted, To announce release to captives And freedom to those in prison.

Zechariah 2:3 Turn to the LORD, all you humble people of the land, who obey his commands. Do what is right, and humble yourselves before the LORD. Perhaps you will escape punishment on the day when the LORD shows his anger.

Psalms 37:3-6 Trust in the LORD and do good; live in the land and be safe. Seek your happiness in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desire. Give yourself to the LORD; trust in him, and he will help you; he will make your righteousness shine like the noonday sun.