

*Meditations in preparation for the Solemnity of St. Joseph  
Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará*

**Meditation of Day 23 (March 11)**

*“Guardian of Virgins”*

*Pray for us.*

I want to tell you in this little testimony, how Saint Joseph is the great Protector and guardian of virgins. Already from the beginning of our Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará, he began to be “guardian and protector as he did with Mary and Jesus”<sup>1</sup> “Just as he lovingly cared for Mary and dedicated himself with joyful commitment to the education of Jesus Christ, he also guards and protects the mystical body, the Church, of which the Holy Virgin is a figure and model.”<sup>2</sup> Many times the guardianship which St. Joseph works in us is “discreet, humble, silent, but with a constant presence and total fidelity.”<sup>3</sup>

In all the events of our life, “both in the serene moments of life and in the difficult ones”<sup>4</sup> he is with his protective hand as he did with Mary and Jesus. And he does it especially with us for being Spouses of the Word.

One of our Sisters tells us about the times of war in Syria:

“After having missioned three years in the Gaza Strip, and knowing the need to complete the religious community of Aleppo, I offered to my superiors to go to that mission and in a short time I was assigned to the Saint Tecla community in Aleppo.

Shortly before leaving for the new mission, I received a small statue of St. Joseph as a gift, which I took with me to my new destination. The arrival trip to Aleppo was on July 1, 2014, a time when the war in Syria was in full. We traveled a journey of approximately 9 hours by bus from Damascus to Aleppo, crossing entire villages completely destroyed.

The small image of St. Joseph came with me, in a handbag. Every so often, during the long trip, I touched the image and raised a prayer entrusting to him the protection of the new mission and of each of the Christians of whose community I would now also be a part.

I confess that by the grace of God I was never afraid of war, despite my natural cowardice. But I did greatly fear one thing, for me, for the sisters in my community and for the young women we were in charge of in the Christian university residence that we were to serve in the mission: a real danger to which we were exposed as women and as Christians, was the abusive and degrading treatment that the rebels give to women when they enter and take possession. I did fear that much.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Homily for the Solemnity of St. Joseph: March 19, 2013 “God trusted that Joseph would be a good guardian. A Guardian of whom? A Guardian of Mary and Jesus”

<sup>2</sup> St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 1

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, Homily for the Solemnity of St. Joseph: March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013

<sup>4</sup> *ibidem*

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I decided then to entrust to St. Joseph the protection of my new mission, especially the protection of my community of sisters and the young women we were in charge of. The little statue of St. Joseph always accompanied us when we had to leave the house for apostolate or to care for some need. I write this testimony as a recognition and a public thanksgiving to Saint Joseph, who kept taking care of us in the various situations we experienced during the war and of which I describe only a few below.

Protection in the dangers of war,

-Visit to an injured person in the hospital:

After days of heavy fighting, in which a 23-year-old young Christian had been seriously injured and the situation was calmer, we decided to visit him at the hospital where he was hospitalized, just 10 blocks from home. The boy had been hit by the splinters of a projectile that exploded when he was leaving the church to go home. A year earlier, his youngest brother - only 10 years old - had died, when a missile exploded in the street on the road he was traveling, back from school to the house.

While we were in the hospital accompanying the boy and his heroic mother for a few moments, who did not stop thanking God for all the things that He arranges wisely, new attacks were unleashed very close to our house.

The nuns were in the hospital. A group of the young women were at home and another in the university.

We immediately contacted the girls to see how they were. The backdrop was continuous bursts, trembling of the entire hospital building, some landslides, ambulance sirens, police, and firemen on the streets, large and very dense clouds of black smoke. It was predicted that the fighting would grow in intensity and would be prolonged. As soon as the severity of the explosions seemed to slow down, we returned home. The spectacle of the road was something indescribable: vehicles transporting injured, people crying in the streets, people asking for passage with children injured in their arms, the noise of explosions, smoke, sirens, pain .....

With the statue of St. Joseph always in my handbag and with ejaculatory prayers, we raised prayers to our protector spontaneously while the vehicle in a zigzagging winding tried to reach the destination with speed. We arrived. We found the young women at home scared, all together in a room, praying to St. Joseph.

The young women who were in the university, also entrusted themselves to his protection and in moments when there seemed to be calm between one explosion to another, they came running and crying home. After a few hours that seemed endless, we were finally all gathered, in the basement sector, which is more protected, healthy and safe. Thus we spent several days - some with up to 18 uninterrupted hours of explosions a few meters from our house - until the terrible confrontations of that time diminished.

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We thank St. Joseph for his protection.”<sup>5</sup>

We ask for the final perseverance and strength of all Christians and religious who are in the countries of war, to bear witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ even if God asks all of them, even unto death.

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<sup>5</sup> Saint Joseph and the Servants of the Lord, Second Edition, pg. 147-150