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**FATHERHOOD AND GOOD DEATH: THE CULT OF ST. JOSEPH
IN LATE-COLONIAL VENEZUELA**

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University Private University

Vienna

May 2023

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Guillermo Javier Bisbal Cabrera**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

Since the emergence of the cult of St. Joseph in the Middle Ages it has had a massive spread throughout the Christianized world, particularly in the early modern period. The Saint's figure has been an example for Christian husbands, fathers, workers, and the dying. The present research deals with the expression of the cult of St. Joseph in Venezuela during the colonial period, focusing on its influence on the ideas and practices of fatherhood and good death.

The main aim of this research is to examine the ways in which St. Joseph was used as an exemplary figure in eighteenth-century Venezuela. In order to accomplish this, I studied textual and visual sources on St. Joseph that were created or circulated in the province of Venezuela during the second half of the eighteenth century. In parallel, I studied the relevant bibliography on the figure and the adoption of the cult of St. Joseph in Europe and other parts of Latin America.

Thanks to the analysis of the depictions and devotional books dedicated to St. Joseph in the province of Venezuela, it is possible to conclude two points: 1) the representations of the figure of St. Joseph followed the pictorial and devotional parameters produced in the metropolis and the viceregal centers of power in the overseas colonies (Mexico, Peru). 2) The paintings and devotional texts of St. Joseph served to support and promote an ideal model of fatherhood (with fathers present in the home and participating in the upbringing of their children) and good death (the dying should be prepared for death and be accompanied on the deathbed).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Marcell Sebők and Carsten Wilke, for their advice and guidance throughout the 2-year Master's program and the writing of this thesis. I am also grateful to Bukje van den Berg, Katalin Szende and my colleagues in the MA Thesis Seminar, whose insights have contributed to this work. In the same way, I'm particularly grateful to Kaila, Andrei, and Bernat, whose comments and corrections have improved this research.

I would also like to thank my family for their unconditional support and encouragement. Eloisa, without you none of this would be possible. Thanks Emanuele Amodio for everything you have taught me, which I continue to use in my research.

I dedicate this study on fatherhood and death to my dad.

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Introduction

St. Joseph is one of the most important and venerated saints in the Roman Catholic Church. However, this universal significance of Jesus' earthly father and Mary's spouse is relatively recent. It was not until the Catholic Reformation when the Church began to construct and use the figure of St. Joseph as a patron of married couples, families, fertility, and a good death. This general veneration occurred after the proclamation of the universal feast of St. Joseph in 1621, celebrated every year on March 19, and was reinforced by the claim of St. Joseph as the patron and protector of the Catholic Church, proclaimed by Pius IX in 1870.¹ The saint's importance continues to this day; Pope Francis proclaimed 2020 the Year of St. Joseph to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the saint's official protectorate over the Catholic Church.²

In addition, in the last fifty years, theological and scientific studies on St. Joseph have increased, with specialized journals and annual conferences devoted to all topics related to this saint.³ Much of the research on St. Joseph focuses on the gradual construction and presence of the cult of this saint in different periods and places. The present study is part of this type of research, interested especially in the high point of the cult of St. Joseph in Hispanic America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At that time, the figure of St. Joseph was present in devotional books and paintings created in the centers of power within the Spanish colonial system: the viceroyalties of Peru and New Spain.⁴ My attention, however, will move to a more

¹ Carolyn C. Wilson, *St. Joseph in Italian Renaissance society and art: new directions and interpretations* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2001), 8.

² Francis, "Apostolic Letter Patris Corde of the Holy Father Francis on the 150th Anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church." last modified December 8, 2020, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html

³ Joseph F. Chorpennig, ed., *Joseph of Nazareth through the centuries* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University, 2011).

⁴ Pierre Ragon, «La promoción del culto a san José en Nueva España (siglos XVII y XVIII)», en *A la luz de Roma: Santos y santidad en el barroco iberoamericano*, ed. Fernando Quiles García et al. (Sevilla: Universidad Pablo de Olavide, 2020), 400; Irma Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, monarquía y poder: el glorioso patriarca señor san Joseph en el Perú virreinal*, 1. ed, Publicaciones del Instituto Riva-Agüero 267 (Lima, Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Instituto Riva-Agüero, 2010), 14.

peripheral area of Latin America: the province of Venezuela. In its particular case, the devotion to St. Joseph through artistic expression peaked in the second half of the eighteenth century. This relative delay can be explained by the political and economic situation of the province at that time.

It was not until the eighteenth century that the province of Venezuela became a major exporter of coffee, cacao, and indigo. At first, it supplied cacao to meet the high demand of the mineral-producing colony of New Spain, and by the middle of the century, it was the main exporter of cacao and indigo to Spain. This transformation of the relationship between Spain and Venezuela was possible thanks to the creation of the Royal Guipuzcoan Company of Caracas, from 1728 to 1784, to guarantee the monopoly of goods exported from Venezuela to Europe.⁵

The new economic importance within the Spanish Empire had political and administrative repercussions with the creation of the Captaincy General of Venezuela in 1777, and the province of Venezuela became the administrative center of five other provinces: Maracaibo, Barinas, Trinidad, Cumaná, Guayana, and Margarita.⁶ This higher position within the Spanish Empire, achieved in the late colonial period, allowed a more constant exchange of techniques, materials, styles, religious themes, works of art, and books between the province of Venezuela and the Viceroyalty of New Spain and the metropolis, including, of course, the primacy of the veneration of the figure of St. Joseph.

The present study focuses on the province of Venezuela (also known as the province of Caracas) because of its predominance in the connections between Venezuela and Spain, as well as other American colonies. The area had two important ports at the time: La Guaira (near Caracas) and Puerto Cabello. In addition, almost 80% of the cacao production was located in its fertile

⁵ P. Michael McKinley, *Pre-revolutionary Caracas: politics, economy, and society, 1777-1811* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5.

⁶ McKinley, 4.

regions, where the main urban settlements were established, and therefore more than half of the population of the Captaincy General lived in the province, reaching more than 400,000 inhabitants. For this reason, the province of Venezuela had the highest concentration of religious institutions in the Captaincy General of Venezuela.⁷ For all these reasons, Venezuela is a good case study for understanding the spread of the cult of St. Joseph in Latin America.

My goal is to study the diffusion and expression of Christian ideas and beliefs in late colonial Venezuela. I believe that the cult of Saint Joseph as head of the Holy Family and patron of a good death can reveal a deeper cultural logic about everyday life, gender, family, and identity among the colonial population of Latin American cities, in this case among Christian believers in the province of Venezuela. This cult of St. Joseph is still present in contemporary Venezuela and in other parts of the Christian world, thanks to the feast of St. Joseph, celebrated every year on March 19. Therefore, it could be interesting to highlight the origins and early expressions of this particular religious practice, and to understand how it could influence the way of life of the faithful, and vice versa, how the way of life of the faithful in Venezuela could shape the cult of St. Joseph to fit their particular needs and social context.

As a result, the present study will provide insights into how the figure of St. Joseph was expressed and used in the province of Venezuela during the late colonial period (second half of the eighteenth century). In this study, I will define whether the figure of Saint Joseph was presented and represented in a special way in Venezuela, or whether it followed the same patterns spread by the Catholic Church from the metropolis and the viceregal centers of power in the overseas colonies of the Americas. Special attention will be given to how St. Joseph was presented as an example of how to be a good father and how to have a good death.

⁷ McKinley, 4.

To achieve this goal, I will engage with key literature about the saint in the Americas. Most of these studies focus only on the expression of the cult in the Andean and Mesoamerican regions, places with established colonial capitals and viceroyalties. Charlene Villaseñor Black, for example, has explored this in detail in her historical and gendered research on the complex figure of St. Joseph as a husband, father, worker, and deceased in Mexico and Spain.⁸ Other works dealing with the cult of St. Joseph in Latin America include Irma Barriga Calle's book⁹ on the viceroyalty of Peru and Carolyn Wilson's article¹⁰ on the figure of St. Joseph in colonial Bolivia. Similarly, the two articles by Gabriela Sánchez Reyes, one on images of Joseph's paternal love for Jesus¹¹ and the other on images of Joseph's death¹² in colonial Mexico, were especially useful. Another key book is a compilation of essays on the figure of St. Joseph throughout history, edited by Joseph F. Chorpennig, entitled *Joseph of Nazareth through the Centuries*.¹³ I also engaged with literature on the cult of saints in general, especially the works of Robert Bartlett,¹⁴ Peter Brown,¹⁵ Peter Burke,¹⁶ and Aviad Kleinberg.¹⁷

⁸ Charlene Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 34.

⁹ Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, monarquía y poder*.

¹⁰ Carolyn C. Wilson, "The Image of Saint Joseph in a Selection of Colonial Paintings in Bolivian Collections," in *The Art of Painting in Colonial Bolivia =: El Arte de La Pintura En La Bolivia Colonial*, ed. Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt, Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts Series, vol. 15 (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2017), 155–87.

¹¹ Gabriela Sánchez Reyes, «Su oficio fue criarlo, sustentarlo y traerlo en brazos: Reflexiones sobre la imagen de san José y el Niño Jesús como ideal del amor paterno», en *Amor e Historia. La expresión de los afectos en el mundo de ayer* (México D.F.: Colegio de México, 2013), 319–41.

¹² Gabriela Sánchez Reyes, «San José, esperanza de los enfermos y patrono de los moribundos; un eficaz remedio durante el tránsito de la muerte», en *Los miedos en la historia*, ed. Elisa Speckman Guerra, Claudia Agostoni, y Pilar Gonzalbo (México, D.F.: Colegio de México : Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009).

¹³ Chorpennig, *Joseph of Nazareth through the centuries*.

¹⁴ Robert Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things? saints and worshippers from the martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Second edition, enlarged edition (Chicago London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Peter Burke, «How to Become a Counter-Reformation Saint», en *The Counter-Reformation: the essential readings*, ed. David Martin Luebke, Blackwell essential readings in history (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1999), 130–42.

¹⁷ Aviad M. Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, Pbk. ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

All these texts helped to contextualize how after the Council of Trent, the cult of the saints was strengthened and certain saints became the model of the Catholic reform movement, some of them associated with certain religious orders and ascetic practices, others with the army, the papacy, and the holy kingship, but also with the family and the events of the life cycle.¹⁸ The case of St. Joseph was one of the saints propagated with great fervor by Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Discalced Carmelites throughout the Christianized world in the early modern period.

In order to understand how a particular saint was used as an example, my analysis is based on anthropological reflections on examples and exemplars in religious movements, especially in Christianity. According to Joel Robbins' reflections on the matter, an example should be defined alongside an specific value, so that any significant example used by any culture gives awareness of a specific value in the world.¹⁹ This awareness could be extended not only to moral values, but also to other cultural ideas. This can include general and specialized knowledge, narratives of the past, and instructions on how to do something properly.

Caroline Humphrey's work on exemplars and rules can give us insights into how examples, personified by certain fictional or real people, can be an effective way of explaining morality and other issues to members of a given culture. She recognizes three characteristics of the use of examples:

¹⁸ Burke, «How to Become a Counter-Reformation Saint», 137.

¹⁹ Joel Robbins, «Ritual, Value, and Example: On the Perfection of Cultural Representations: Ritual, Value, and Example», *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21, n.º S1 (mayo de 2015): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12163>.

- 1- They are capable of building individuality, which can be related to individual differences and social hierarchy, such as status, role, occupation, class, etc. Everyone chooses one or more exemplars for different reasons and circumstances.²⁰
- 2- They are not completely consistent with each other. Each one focuses on one or more values that are not necessarily compatible with each other.²¹ In the case of the Christian tradition, there are inconsistencies both between and within the hagiographical narratives.
- 3- The person must actively understand and put into practice the moral ideas given by the example because they are usually incomplete and open to different interpretations.²²

Humphrey believes that these points are not present in Western and Christian practice, but other authors, such as Andreas Bandak, insist that "Western traditions abound with exemplary figures giving content and form to these [moral] rules."²³ From antiquity to the present, Christianity has suggested that the primary model for believers is the perfection of Christ, which cannot be fully imitated but should be approached. Furthermore, "All saints were expected to serve as exemplars. Sainthood was part of the saints' role as mediators between God and men. Unlike Christ, the saints were not perfect, and thus being like them was conceivable."²⁴

Therefore, Christian believers are encouraged to reflect on the lives of certain saints and to change their persona to imitate the virtues of these moral examples.²⁵ Each believer can choose the saint (or saints) of his or her preference. This choice can be determined by various factors, personal or social. One might be the recommendation of the religious authority, the location of

²⁰ Caroline Humphrey, «Exemplars and Rules: Aspects of the Discourse of Moralities in Mongolia», en *The Ethnography of Moralities*, ed. Signe Howell (Routledge, 2005), 35.

²¹ Humphrey, 38.

²² Humphrey, 34.

²³ Andreas Bandak, «Exemplary Series and Christian Typology: Modelling on Sainthood in Damascus: Exemplary Series and Christian Typology», *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21, n.º S1 (mayo de 2015): 55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12165>.

²⁴ Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country*, 134.

²⁵ Bandak, «Exemplary Series and Christian Typology», 54.

the congregation, or the believer's role and economic position within the community. Whatever model of sanctity is chosen, the goal of this reflection and imitation of the model is an opportunity for each person to examine his or her own life and to be used as an impetus for a change in life.²⁶

In addition, it is important to note that examples need a vehicle of communication in order to fulfill their function of providing awareness of cultural ideas that are important to any culture. In this way, any cultural action and the products of those cultural actions can be considered possible vehicles of examples, including discourses, images, writings, performances, etc. In the Christian tradition, the example of the saints is usually presented through a dual relationship between writing and painting:

This dual meaning, in a striking way, attests to what the relation between word and image in a Christian tradition craft as exemplary: the word paints an image, a story, a narrative, as the divine ordeal is fleshed out in types across time and space – something which, in Catholic and Orthodox traditions, is very tangible in the form of statues and icons which materialize and make tangible the words of the sermon in physical form. But the opposite also holds: images and icons render the word of God accessible as a scripted story that one can become a part of.²⁷

Following these ideas, the textual and iconographic sources used in the present study can be considered as vehicles of communication for the exemplary model of saints, in this particular case the figure of St. Joseph as the earthly father of Jesus and patron of the good death.

The main textual sources used in this research are devotional books about St. Joseph. All of these religious texts circulated in the cities of Venezuela, as evidenced by the compilation of inventories of private libraries taken from testaments and wills between 1633 and 1767. This information was compiled by the historian Ildefonso Leal and is available in the two volumes

²⁶ Bandak, 54.

²⁷ Bandak, 55.

of *Books and Libraries in colonial Venezuela*.²⁸ Some of these libraries had secular owners, such as civil servants, members of the army, and landowners. Other libraries had ecclesiastical owners such as missionaries, bishops, and priests. In addition, this information is supplemented by the research of Cristina Soriano, who compiled the inventories of libraries of the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁹ Other textual sources used are the transcriptions of the pastoral visits made by Bishop Mariano Martí between 1771 and 1784,³⁰ and the transcriptions of the records of the Ecclesiastical Councils of Caracas were also used.³¹

The iconographic sources were collected from catalogs of colonial iconography found in Venezuela, which depict St. Joseph in a wide variety of circumstances and events. However, the focus of the study is on the paintings of St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and some examples of the Holy Family.³² Other visual sources are altarpieces built during the colonial period and preserved in some Venezuelan churches. Many of these altarpieces were dedicated to St. Joseph or have some elements related to the saint.³³

In order to study the use of examples to communicate moral virtues in the Christian world, it is necessary to analyze the vehicles used to transmit the messages. Through the contextualization of religious images and devotional texts on particular saints, it is possible to reconstruct the

²⁸ Ildefonso Leal, *Libros y bibliotecas en Venezuela colonial (1633-1767)*, Segunda edición, Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia. Fuentes para la Historia Colonial de Venezuela 132–133 (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2014).

²⁹ Cristina Soriano, «Bibliotecas, lectores y saber en Caracas durante el siglo XVIII», en *Producción, circuitos de distribución y conformación de bibliotecas en los siglos XVI al XVIII*, ed. Idalia García Aguilar y Pedro Rueda Ramírez (México, D.F.: Ediciones Quivira, 2014).

³⁰ Mariano Martí, *Obispo Mariano Martí: documentos relativos a su visita pastoral de la Diócesis de Caracas, 1771-1784*, ed. Lino Gómez Canedo, 2. ed, Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia 95–100 (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1988).

³¹ *Actas del Cabildo Eclesiástico de Caracas. Compendio Cronológico* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1963).

³² Carlos F. Duarte, *Juan Pedro López: maestro de pintor, escultor y dorador, 1724-1787*, Exposición, n. 173 (Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional : Fundación Polar, 1996); Carlos F. Duarte, *Pintura e iconografía popular de Venezuela*, E. Armitano (Caracas, 1978).

³³ Graziano Gasparini y Carlos F. Duarte, *Los retablos del periodo hispánico en Venezuela*, 2a. ed (Caracas: Armitano, 1986).

political purpose of the creation of that particular exemplary model. It is also possible to study the uses of this model, especially its application and dissemination among the faithful. However, these types of sources impose certain limitations on the present study. The reception and effectiveness of the exemplary model are the most difficult elements to study with only iconography and religious texts. This is mainly because the cultural products (images and texts) described and analyzed in this study are removed from their context of production and consumption. Thus, the researcher has to rely on other types of sources that are not always available or have not survived to the present day. Therefore, the main point of this dissertation is to highlight the political purposes and formal uses of the exemplary model of a particular saint in a specific time and place, in this particular case: Saint Joseph in Venezuela in the second half of the eighteenth century.

This dissertation is divided into three main chapters. The presentation and contextualization of the vehicles used to spread the cult and the figure of St. Joseph as an exemplary model is the subject of the first chapter. The presentation and analysis of the content of the exemplary model of St. Joseph transmitted through textual and visual vehicles to the Christian faithful in late colonial Venezuela are explained in the second and third chapters. The second chapter, addresses the ways in which St. Joseph and his role as the earthly father of Jesus Christ were presented as an example of how to be a good father. The third chapter presents how St. Joseph, as the patron of good death was an example to guarantee a proper Christian transition to the afterlife.

Chapter 1: The presence of the figure of St. Joseph in late-colonial Venezuela

One of the most illustrative pieces of evidence of the increasing popularity of St. Joseph in the Spanish Empire was the several kinds of proclamations of him as a patron. In 1555, Joseph of Nazareth was elected as the general patron of New Spain by the First Mexican Council, in order to gain his holy intercession in the conquest and conversion process in Mexico.³⁴

Nonetheless, the unsuccessful proclamation of St. Joseph as the patron of the Spanish Kingdom and its vast overseas possessions is particularly revealing. In 1679, King Charles II of Spain issued a *Real Cédula* (Royal Decree) to substitute the patronage of St. James the Apostle (Santiago) with the foster father of Jesus Christ and husband of the Virgin Mary.³⁵ With this move, King Charles II followed in the steps of his uncle, Emperor Leopold I, who had proclaimed St. Joseph as protector of the Habsburg House in 1675.³⁶

Therefore, the causes of the rise of St. Joseph as patron of the Spanish Kingdom could have been both political and personal. Charles II likely hoped to solve some of the kingdom's government conflicts and his notorious infertility problems through the divine intercession of St. Joseph.³⁷ By the end of the seventeenth century, St. Joseph was a well-known saint who intervened in fertility and childbirth issues.³⁸

³⁴ José de Jesús y María, "Política y Religiosidad En El Barroco Español: El Fracasado Patronato de San José Sobre España y Sus Dominios (1679)," *Estudios Josefinos* 35, no. 69–70 (1981): 673.

³⁵ Charlene Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 21.

³⁶ de Jesús y María, "Política y Religiosidad En El Barroco Español: El Fracasado Patronato de San José Sobre España y Sus Dominios (1679)," 674.

³⁷ Jorge Luis Merlo Solorio, "Entre paternidad y poderío. El patrocinio de san José: garante monárquico.," in *Devociones religiosas en México y Perú, siglos XVI-XVIII*, ed. Gisela von Wobeser, María Fernanda Mora Reyes, and Ramón Jiménez Gómez, Primera edición, Historia novohispana 113 (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2021), 182.

³⁸ Charlene Villaseñor Black, "St. Anne Imagery and Maternal Archetypes in Spain and Mexico," in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500-1800*, ed. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13.

However, King Charles II had to revoke the general patronage of St. Joseph one year after its proclamation. The reason was not the lack of Josephine fervor among the elites and the rest of the population; rather, it was to avoid interfering with the traditional patronage over the Spanish realms the Jacobians had held for over eight hundred years.³⁹ As happened with the failed attempt to raise St. Teresa de Jesús as co-patron of the Spanish Kingdom alongside Santiago in 1617, any effort that would threaten the monopoly sustained by the cult of Santiago was destined to fail.⁴⁰

However, this revocation did not seriously affect the devotion of the fatherly saint in the Spanish empire.⁴¹ In fact, St. Joseph's figure was very present all over the kingdom and its colonies in paintings, sermons, and festivities since the second half of the seventeenth century.

The royal promotion of St. Joseph through patronages and protectorates was not the only reason for his cult to be so widespread in devotional practices. In overseas colonies, his presence in devotional practices was extensive during the seventeenth and peaked in the eighteenth century. This was thanks to the work of religious orders, some of them were the major promoters of St. Joseph's cult and veneration, particularly in colonial Latin America. Mainly five orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Mercedarians, and Jesuits) built the structure of any colonial settlement and expanded the boundaries of the Spanish Empire in America. They were able to do it through "Third Orders, fraternities, boards of trustees, leaseholders of estates, chantries, schools, families whose children took holy orders, public worship, festivals of

³⁹ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 21; Merlo Solorio, "Entre paternidad y poderío. El patrocinio de san José: garante monárquico," 189.

⁴⁰ de Jesús y María, "Política y Religiosidad En El Barroco Español: El Fracasado Patronato de San José Sobre España y Sus Dominios (1679)," 679.

⁴¹ On the use of the saints by the Habsburg ruling dynasties in Austria and Spain, see Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca* (West Lafayette, Ind: Purdue University Press, 2004); Fernando Checa Cremades y Laura Fernández-González, eds., *Festival Culture in the World of the Spanish Habsburgs* (Taylor and Francis, 2016); Marie-Elizabeth Ducreux, «Patronage, Politics, and Devotion: The Habsburgs of Central Europe and Jesuit Saints», *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 9, n.º 1 (11 de enero de 2022): 53-75, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-09010004>.

saints.”⁴² Other orders, such as the Carmelites, Hieronymites, Trinitarians, and Minims, were present to a lesser extent in urban settlements. In the particular case of Venezuela, there was a strong presence of Franciscans and Dominicans evangelizing the natives and founding ecclesiastical institutions such as convents, churches, and missions.⁴³

The Franciscans and the Dominicans were the ones with more history in the promotion to celebrate St. Joseph’s feast as a way of awaking fervor to the saint.⁴⁴ The Franciscans were the first to adopt a feast of the saint in 1399. Pope Sixtus IV (p. 1479-83), who was part of the order, issued an official ecclesiastical establishment of St. Joseph’s cult in 1479, making Joseph’s feast official on March 19. However, he introduced it into the liturgy of the Catholic Church without making it obligatory to celebrate.⁴⁵ The Dominican order followed with the adoption of the feast between 1508 and 1517, but it was not until 1621 that the feast was established for the whole Church.⁴⁶ As a result, during their missionary works in the New World, both orders spread the prominence of Joseph and his sanctity for being the earthly father of Christ and protective husband of the Virgin Mary.

In the same way, Jesuits and Discalced Carmelites gave a new impulse to the veneration of St. Joseph’s figure and virtues in Spain and its colonies from the seventeenth century on.⁴⁷ The Carmelite order in particular followed the fervor of its reformer, Teresa de Ávila. In her autobiography, she explained why St. Joseph was one of the most powerful intercessors to help

⁴² Josep M. Barnadas, “The Catholic Church in Colonial Spanish America,” in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 519.

⁴³ Barnadas, 520.

⁴⁴ Irma Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, Monarquía y Poder: El Glorioso Patriarca Señor San Joseph En El Perú Virreinal*, 1. ed, Publicaciones Del Instituto Riva-Agüero 267 (Lima, Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Instituto Riva-Agüero, 2010), 13.

⁴⁵ Carol M. Richardson, “St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs: St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs,” *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 2012): 246; Anne L. Williams, “Satirizing the Sacred: Humor in Saint Joseph’s Veneration and Early Modern Art,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 10, no. 1 (March 1, 2018): 3.

⁴⁶ Richardson, “St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs,” 246.

⁴⁷ Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, Monarquía y Poder*, 13.

in every need and therefore should be considered a universal saint.⁴⁸ In order to demonstrate her point, Teresa narrated how the spiritual intervention of St. Joseph cured her crippling illness, suffered shortly after entering the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation in Ávila (1539).⁴⁹ During and after Teresa's Carmelite reformation,⁵⁰ St. Joseph fulfilled an important role as a "teacher of prayer, protector on her many journeys, and guardian of her foundations."⁵¹

St. Teresa and her followers were one of the most effective promoters of the cult of St. Joseph in colonial Latin America. This was accomplished by using his name in the great majority of Discalced Carmelites monasteries and popularizing images of the saint with paintings and sculptures in all their establishments.⁵² The Convent of Discalced Carmelites of Saint Teresa in Caracas, founded in 1732, offered 40 days of indulgences to anyone who prayed in front of the images of St. Joseph kept in the convent. In addition, many of the nuns kept the image of St. Joseph inside their cells.⁵³

Even though the Spanish monarchy and the leaders of religious orders had an important role in the diffusion and implementation of the cult of St. Joseph in the entire Spanish Empire, they are not the only promoters worthy of consideration. Local priests and preachers were the intermediaries between the popular believers and the elites. At a time when the great majority

⁴⁸ Joseph F. Chorpennig, "St. Joseph in the Spirituality of Teresa of Ávila and of Francis de Sales: Convergences and Divergences," in *The Heirs of St. Teresa of Ávila: Defenders and Disseminators of the Founding Mother's Legacy*, ed. Christopher C. Wilson (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2006), 132.

⁴⁹ Chorpennig, 128; Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 33.

⁵⁰ In 1562, St. Teresa of Jesus carried out a reform of the order and founded the first convent of Discalced Carmelites (called the Convent of St. Joseph) in the city of Avila. Later, together with St. John of the Cross, she founded the Discalced Carmelite branch. The new rule sought to return to a contemplative life dedicated to God in simplicity and austerity, like that of the first hermits of Mount Carmel, who followed the example of the prophet Elijah. They were known as Discalced Carmelites because they wore sandals instead of shoes and stockings to distinguish themselves from the older branch of the order. José García Oro, *Historia de la Iglesia*, Sapientia fidei 31 (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 2005), 157.

⁵¹ Joseph F. Chorpennig, "St. Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative: Christophorus Blancus's Engravings for the Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph (1597)," in *Joseph of Nazareth through the Centuries*, ed. Joseph F. Chorpennig (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University, 2011), 106.

⁵² Chorpennig, 106.

⁵³ Mariano Martí, *Obispo Mariano Martí: Documentos Relativos a Su Visita Pastoral de La Diócesis de Caracas, 1771-1784*, ed. Lino Gómez Canedo, 2. ed, Biblioteca de La Academia Nacional de La Historia 95–100 (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1988), Tome II, 89.

of the population of the province did not know how to read, priests communicated religious texts through discourses and translations during sermons and masses. They propagated Catholic beliefs concerning saints to a wider audience, transforming the complex subjects of the theological dissertations into a more colloquial and familiar discourse.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, religious oral tradition in colonial Venezuela was barely registered, and evidence of it is scarce. Despite this, the oral discourses can be reconstructed indirectly with the analysis of the records of ecclesiastical councils, the inventories of ecclesiastical properties made during Pastoral Visits, the devotional texts that circulated at that time, and the visual arts inside churches and convents.⁵⁵ In the same way, these sources demonstrate the presence of the cult of St. Joseph in Venezuela during the eighteenth century.

One of the most useful sources to understand religious institutions in colonial Venezuela are the documents related to the pastoral visit of the Diocese of Venezuela made by bishop Mariano Martí between 1771 and 1784. During those 13 years, the bishop paid a visit that covered the territory of the province of Venezuela and included key cities and towns of the provinces of Barinas and Maracaibo.⁵⁶ The detailed descriptions made by the bishop give us an insight into the institutional system of the church in this region and explain how it functioned.

The use of specific religious figures to name churches shows their popularity among a specific community. As such, analyzing the number of parishes dedicated to St Joseph can offer key insights into the popularity of the saint among the founders of religious institutions. During his

⁵⁴ Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, Monarquía y Poder*, 27.

⁵⁵ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 18.

⁵⁶ Dora Dávila-Mendoza, "La Visita Pastoral Del Obispo Mariano Martí a La Diócesis de Caracas, 1771-1784. Fuentes y Temas Para Un Estudio Social," *Anuario de Historia de La Iglesia* 28 (May 2019): 111, <https://doi.org/10.15581/007.28.101-131>.

visit to the province of Venezuela, bishop Martí registered 178 parish churches and fourteen of them were under the invocation of St. Joseph.⁵⁷

Of these fourteen churches, six of them were settlements of Indians, four were erected in settlements of black people that worked in plantations, and the rest were founded in Spanish towns and cities characterized by the presence of white (Spanish and Creole), mestizo (mixture of ethnicities) and black population.⁵⁸ More than half of them were located in the coastal range near the capital as seen in the following figure of the province.

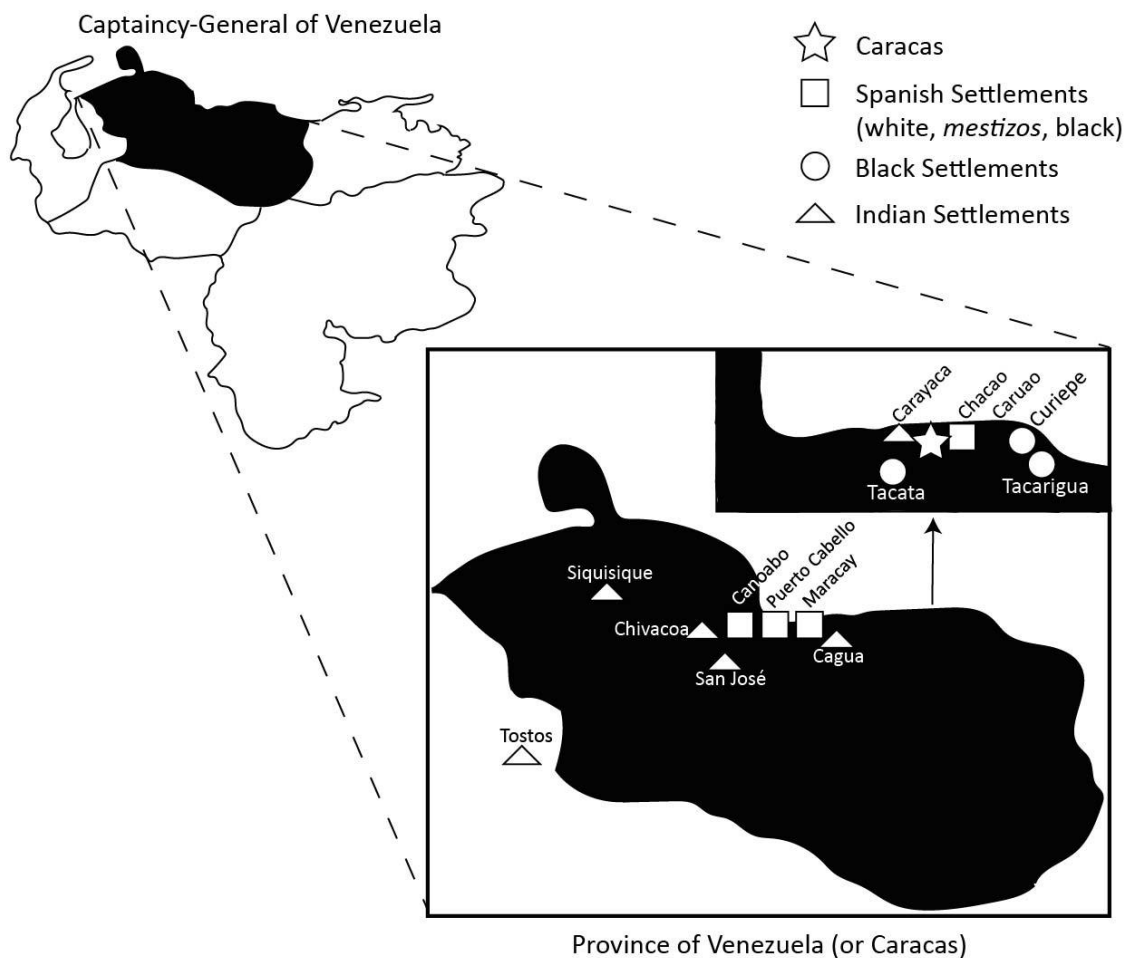


Figure 1 - Location of Churches dedicated to St. Joseph in the Province of Venezuela (figure created by the author)

⁵⁷ Estimation made by Dávila-Mendoza, "La Visita Pastoral Del Obispo Mariano Martí a La Diócesis de Caracas, 1771-1784. Fuentes y Temas Para Un Estudio Social."

⁵⁸ Martí, *Obispo Mariano Martí*, Tome I.

In colonial Venezuela and the rest of Hispanic America, confraternities were specific ecclesiastical institutions that served to organize “charitable practices, and the funerary rites of its members and supporters.”⁵⁹ Each confraternity was dedicated to one religious figure, and that “usually determined the annual festivities of the brotherhood, along with other religious practices that organized with the community and the church.”⁶⁰ At the time of Martí’s visit to the Diocese of Venezuela, the bishop did not register any confraternities dedicated to the figure of St. Joseph, despite almost every parish church having more than one of these institutions. It was not for lack of these institutions in the province; in the case of Caracas, up to forty confraternities existed in the fifteen temples of the city by the middle of the eighteenth century.⁶¹ Therefore, the absence of confraternities under the name of St. Joseph seems odd in the province of Venezuela, even more in comparison to Mexico City, which had twenty confraternities with St. Joseph’s name.⁶²

The predominant type of confraternities in Venezuela could explain the lack of confraternities under the name of St. Joseph. Confraternities grouped persons of the same social condition; this was determined by the skin color, status, and profession of the members. The majority of the confraternities in Venezuela gave more importance to the social status of their members rather than the artisanal professions (silversmiths, blacksmiths, or carpenters).⁶³ In New Spain, several confraternities with St. Joseph’s name were organized by artisans, especially carpenters, to whom Joseph was a clear choice to venerate.

⁵⁹ Andreina Soto, “Purchasing the Status: Religious Confraternities in Late-Colonial Venezuela,” *CONCEPT* XXXIX (2016): 8.

⁶⁰ Soto, 10.

⁶¹ Aristides Rojas, *Capítulos de La Historia Colonial de Venezuela* (Madrid: Editorial América, 1919), 99.

⁶² Pierre Ragon, “La Promoción Del Culto a San José En Nueva España (Siglos XVII y XVIII),” in *A La Luz de Roma: Santos y Santidad En El Barroco Iberoamericano*, ed. Fernando Quiles García et al. (Sevilla: Universidad Pablo de Olavide, 2020), 403.

⁶³ Ermila Troconis de Veracoechea, “La Iglesia En La Venezuela Colonial,” *Boletín de La Academia Nacional de La Historia* 70, no. 277 (1987): 2.

Visual representations of St. Joseph

Paintings are the best-preserved sources that showcase religious ideas around the figure of St. Joseph and his role in the Holy Family as a father, spouse, and worker. The most common visual display of the figure was inside churches, convents, and confraternities. Images and sculptures of St. Joseph were sometimes part of altars or were simply located on one of the walls of the building.

This was the case with the parish church in Chacao.⁶⁴ Dedicated to St. Joseph, its main altarpiece displayed/depicted “a painting of Saint Joseph, a large one, below a niche where the image of Our Lady of Succour is placed.”⁶⁵ This altarpiece is still standing in the church of Saint Joseph in Chacao (Miranda State). Carlos Duarte proposed a hypothetical dating to ca. 1770. The paintings representing Sts. Anne and Joachim were adapted into the altar at some point during the nineteenth century, and the picture and statue of St. Joseph, as well as the sculpture of the Virgin, are from the second half of the eighteenth century (Figure 2).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Chacao is small town near Caracas, which was founded in 1769.

⁶⁵ Martí, *Obispo Mariano Martí*, Tome III, 204. (retablo pintado en la pared de remate en él un cuadro de San José, grande más abajo un nicho en donde está colocada la imagen de Nuestra Señora del Socorro de talla). All translations from Spanish to English of texts without official translation are done by the author of this thesis, unless otherwise indicated.

⁶⁶ Graziano Gasparini and Carlos F. Duarte, *Los retablos del periodo hispánico en Venezuela*, 2a. ed (Caracas: Armitano, 1986), 105.



Figure 2 - *Main Altarpiece of the Church of Chacao, Caracas.* (G. Gasparini and C. Duarte. *Los retablos del periodo hispánico en Venezuela.* Caracas: Armitano, 1986)

However, the dedication of a church to St. Joseph did not guarantee that the main figure represented inside was the saint in the form of paintings or sculptures. This is the case of Siquisique, Tostos, and TÁCATA, where the main altarpiece was dedicated to different advocations of the Virgin Mary, and St. Joseph was part of another altar or was located alongside the main altar.⁶⁷ The changes in the name of churches could be one of the explanations for this situation, as well as the lack of funds to change the altarpiece at the same time as the change of the name. Even so, this evidence could prove the primacy of the Virgin

⁶⁷ Martí, *Obispo Mariano Martí*, Tome I, 299, 422; Tome IV, 337.

Mary in institutionalized devotion during colonial times in Venezuela, more prominent and extended than any other Catholic devotion.

On the other hand, the presence of the visual representations of St. Joseph was not exclusive to the ecclesiastical institution dedicated to him. In this sense, the Cathedral of Caracas is a particularly good example.

In 1772, the Cathedral of Caracas had a painting of the saint in one of its niches,⁶⁸ and the chapel of Our Lady of the Populo in the same cathedral displayed an “image of the lord Saint Joseph in full body carving with his table, altar stone, *frotal*, crucifix, and two tablecloths.”⁶⁹

In addition, the altar for the Holy Souls in the same cathedral had a painting of the Holy Souls of Purgatory and it was accompanied by a sculpture of St. Joseph,⁷⁰ making perhaps an association between the eschatological beliefs and Joseph’s patronage of good death to guarantee less time in Purgatory. The most prolific gilder, painter, and sculptor of the second half of the eighteenth century in Caracas, Juan Pedro Lopez, made this sculpture of St. Joseph crowned and carrying baby Jesus (Figure 3), which is still in the Cathedral, in the chapel of St. Pedro.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Martí, Tome III, 5. (imagen del señor San Joseph de talla de cuerpo entero, tiene su mesa, piedra de ara, frotal, crucifijo y dos manteles).

⁶⁹ Martí, Tome III, 8.

⁷⁰ Martí, Tome III, 46.

⁷¹ Gasparini and Duarte, *Los retablos del periodo hispánico en Venezuela*, 85.



Figure 3 - Juan Pedro López, *St. Joseph sculpture in the Cathedral of Caracas*. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)

The paintings of St. Joseph were not only present in churches but were also displayed in private spaces. Testaments are a plentiful source that provides information on the public and private life of men and women who left their assets after their death. However, it is important to note the limitations of this type of source, particularly in the case of colonial Venezuela. Unlike in other colonial spaces, testament writing was severely limited to the wealthiest groups of society in colonial Venezuela. As such, those without access to property owned did not write

testaments. For this reason, testaments showcase only a small portion of the Venezuelan colonial population.⁷²

Some testaments, whose properties included large collections of artworks, listed depictions of St. Joseph. This is the case of Juana Mijares de Solorzano, a plantation owner in Los Valles del Tuy in the north of the province, who wrote a testament in 1741. In her will, she passed on many goods including two paintings of St. Joseph.⁷³ Similarly, General Lieutenant Don José de Oviedo y Baños in his long list of possessions had one painting of St. Joseph with a golden frame and one sheet of copper with the images of the saint.⁷⁴ It is possible to assume that less well-to-do individuals could have had access to visual representations of St. Joseph in the form of stamps and prints; however, there is no evidence of such possession.

None of the testaments mentioned specifies the subject or the scenes in which Saint Joseph is depicted. Nevertheless, based on artworks that have survived to this day in Venezuela, one can propose two types of scenes representing this saint. On the one hand, there would be depictions of biblical (and apocryphal) scenes in which St. Joseph was involved, such as the marriage with the Virgin Mary, the Nativity, the flight into Egypt, and the finding in the Temple. The other type represents the Saint in various positions or the company of other figures. The latter type includes the archetypical representations of Joseph and the Child, the Holy Family, Joseph working as a carpenter, his happy death, and his intercession as a powerful saint. The visual representations of St. Joseph that will be studied and analyzed in the next chapters of the present

⁷² Alberta Zucchi, *Polvo Eres y En Polvo Te Convertirás: La Muerte y Su Entorno En Venezuela Hasta 1940* (Caracas: Antropologica, 2000), 43.

⁷³ Ildefonso Leal, *Libros y Bibliotecas En Venezuela Colonial (1633-1767)*, Segunda edición, Biblioteca de La Academia Nacional de La Historia. Fuentes Para La Historia Colonial de Venezuela 132–133 (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2014), Tome II, 89-90.

⁷⁴ Leal, Tome II, 96-97.

study are the ones that can give information about his good death and his role as the earthly father of Jesus Christ.

Devotional books dedicated to St. Joseph

The artworks mentioned above were commonly accompanied by sermons given by priests or missionaries, explaining their meaning or the way the believer should reflect at the moment of seeing the image. The sources for these oral discourses were theological and devotional books read by the members of the clergy, including a variety of religious treatises dedicated to the life and virtues of saints. These books were generally written by members of the clergy and printed mainly in Europe.

In the case of St. Joseph, the devotional texts dedicated to describing the life and virtues of the saint began to be written in the Middle Ages. The influential devotion of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) to the Virgin Mary and the promotion of the feast driven by Jean Gerson (1363-1429) was key to the formation of the cult of St. Joseph.⁷⁵ Their ideas around the earthly protector of Jesus Christ took form in various sermons⁷⁶ and even poems.⁷⁷ However, the clergy and the believers had to wait until the work of the Italian Dominican Isidoro Isolani (1480-1528)⁷⁸ to have access to the first systematic treatise on Josephine theology.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, none of these medieval texts or their translation was present in the late-colonial libraries of Venezuelan priests or secular owners.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Williams, "Satirizing the Sacred," 2; Richardson, "St Joseph, St Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs," 261.

⁷⁶ Bernard's writings on Sr. Joseph are found in the four homilies ". *Super Missus Est*" known as the *Homiliac de laudibus Virginis Maria*, in Sermon III for Christmas Eve (no. 10) and Sermon IV for Christmas Day (no. 2).

⁷⁷ Jean Gerson. *Josephina*. 1418.

⁷⁸ Carolyn C. Wilson, *St. Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art: New Directions and Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2001), 8.

⁷⁹ *Summa de donis sancti Joseph* (Summa of the Gifts of St. Joseph), 1522.

⁸⁰ Leal, *Libros y Bibliotecas En Venezuela Colonial (1633-1767)*.

The most important promoter of St. Joseph after the council of Trent (1545-1563) was Teresa de Ávila. Thanks to her work, the Josephine devotion was effectively expanded in any part where the Teresian texts and Discalced Carmelites arrived.⁸¹ This can be applied to the case of colonial Venezuela, where some evidence of the presence of Teresian books' compendium⁸² can be found in particular libraries, and the Discalced Carmelites founded a convent in the capital.

However, strangely enough, there is no register of the presence in Venezuela of the important Josephine devotional work written by the Carmelite Jerónimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios (1545-1614). He was the disciple and right hand of Teresa de Ávila during her lifetime and after her death. He was responsible for spreading the Teresian reform not only in the Iberian Peninsula but also all over Europe and America as the first Provincial of the Discalced Carmelites.⁸³ One of the ways he used to promote Teresian virtues and ideas was through the cult of St. Joseph. His text *Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph, Husband of the Virgin Mary*⁸⁴ published in 1597 had a significant impact on the veneration of the saint and it was "one of the most widely read early modern Josephine texts, directly affected artistic representations of the saint in Spain and Mexico."⁸⁵ The text is structured in five parts, each one with a title that defines the figure of St. Joseph: husband of the Virgin, father of Jesus, just man, a witness of angel apparitions, and wise man.

⁸¹ Teófanés Egido, "Santidad y Sociedad (Problemas de La Hagiografía Barroca de San José)," *Estudios Josefinos* 70, no. 140 (2016): 185.

⁸² *Los libros de la Madre Teresa de Jesús/ Fundadora de los monasterios de las monjas y Fray/es Carmelitas*. Barcelona, 1588.

⁸³ Chorpenning, "St. Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative: Christophorus Blancus's Engravings for the Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph (1597)," 107.

⁸⁴ The edition that have been used in the present study is Gracian, Jeronimo, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria* (Madrid: Pedro Rodriguez, 1605).

⁸⁵ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 33.

Despite the lack of this key text in the libraries in eighteenth-century Venezuela, other Josephine books, which were inspired by Gracián's work, had a strong presence, as demonstrated by the historian Ildefonso Leal and Cristina Soriano, who collected lists of books found in different testaments written between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁸⁶

As for the books directly referring to St. Joseph that circulated in colonial Venezuela, we can count Antonio Joseph de Pastrana's work.⁸⁷ He was part of the Dominican Order and the purpose of his text is to explain all the virtues of St. Joseph, giving a Spanish summary of Josephine reflections made by other scholars, such as Isidoro Isolani, Jean Gerson, Jerónimo Gracián, among others. In the same way, a long Josephine poem composed by the poet and playwright Joseph de Valdivielso⁸⁸ had a great diffusion in the Spanish Empire, including the province of Venezuela.⁸⁹ In the poem, Valdivielso narrates the life of St. Joseph from his birth to his death, giving special emphasis on the biblical scenes when the saint protected Jesus and the Virgin.

It is worth mentioning the religious text dedicated, in this case, to the Virgin and saints in general, where information about St. Joseph's life and virtues can be found. An excellent example was *Flos Sanctorum* written by Alonso Villegas,⁹⁰ published in 1583 and widely read in the province of Venezuela until the end of the eighteenth century.⁹¹ The text has six volumes and was printed between 1578 and 1589 with a similar structure to the Golden Legend. Therefore, it includes narrations of the lives of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the twelve

⁸⁶ Cristina Soriano, "Libros y Lectores En Caracas Durante La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XVIII, Tomo II" (Undergraduate thesis, Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1999); Leal, *Libros y Bibliotecas En Venezuela Colonial (1633-1767)*.

⁸⁷ *Empeños del poder y amor de Dios, en la admirable, y prodigiosa vida del Sanctissimo patriarcha Joseph, esposo de la madre de Dios*. Madrid, 1696.

⁸⁸ *Vida, excelencia y muerte del glorioso patriarca y esposo de nuestra Señora San José*. Toledo, 1604.

⁸⁹ Egido, "Santidad y Sociedad (Problemas de La Hagiografía Barroca de San José)," 190–91.

⁹⁰ *Flos sanctorum y historia general en que se escribe la vida de la Virgen Sacratísima madre de dios, nuestra señora y la de los santos antiguos*. Toledo, 1583.

⁹¹ Egido, "Santidad y Sociedad (Problemas de La Hagiografía Barroca de San José)," 194.

Apostles, all of the saints prayed to by the Catholic Church, the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, and many other eminent men, including, of course, St. Joseph.

It is not only important noticing the presence or absence of certain Josephine devotional texts in late-colonial Venezuela but defining the owners is equally relevant. It is not the same case if the owner of the devotional book is part of the clergy or part of the army. The main difference lies in the use of texts. In the case of a religious owner, books were likely read to transmit their content in other situations, such as mass, spiritual exercises, or confessions, to spread the ideas orally to the population that did not have access to texts or was illiterate. Obviously, the content was transformed by the readers and was adapted according to their interests. Secular owners generally tended to read the text individually, which meant a smaller spread of religious ideas outside of the private sphere or the extended family.⁹²

Based on the lists of books collected by Soriano and Leal,⁹³ I have created a table displaying how many religious and secular owners had in their libraries devotional books about St. Joseph in the province of Venezuela. This chart offers a possibility to determine the presence of books dedicated to explaining the life and virtues of St. Joseph to the readers.

⁹² Cristina Soriano, "Bibliotecas, Lectores y Saber En Caracas Durante El Siglo XVIII," in *Producción, Circuitos de Distribución y Conformación de Bibliotecas En Los Siglos XVI al XVIII*, ed. Idalia García Aguilar and Pedro Rueda Ramírez (México, D.F.: Ediciones Quivira, 2014), 246.

⁹³ Cristina Soriano, «Libros y lectores en Caracas durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII, Tomo II» (Undergraduate thesis, Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1999); Leal, *Libros y bibliotecas en Venezuela colonial (1633-1767)*.

Table 1 Circulation of devotional books of Saint Joseph in the province of Venezuela			
Author, title, and date	Ecclesiastical owner	Secular owner	Total
Santa Teresa de Jesús. <i>Los libros de la Madre Teresa de Jesús/ Fundadora de los monasterios de las monjas y Fray/es Carmelitas</i> . Barcelona, 1588.	-	2	2
Antonio Joseph Pastrana. <i>Empeños del poder y amor de Dios, en la admirable, y prodigiosa vida del Sanctissimo patriarcha Joseph, esposo de la madre de Dios</i> . Madrid, 1696.	1	3	4
José de Valdivielso. <i>Vida, excelencia y muerte del glorioso patriarcha y esposo de nuestra Señora San Jóse</i> . Toledo, 1604.	-	6	6
Alonso de Villegas. <i>Flos sanctorum y historia general en que se escribe la vida de la Virgen Sacratísima madre de dios, nuestra señora y la de los santos antiguos</i> . Toledo, 1583.	5	7	12
Sources: Cristina Soriano, “Libros y Lectores En Caracas Durante La Segunda Mitad Del Siglo XVIII, Tomo II” (Undergraduate thesis, Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1999); Ildefonso Leal, <i>Libros y Bibliotecas En Venezuela Colonial (1633-1767)</i> , Segunda edición, Biblioteca de La Academia Nacional de La Historia. Fuentes Para La Historia Colonial de Venezuela 132–133 (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2014). (Table created by the author).			

As seen in table 1, the circulation of devotional books of Saint Joseph in the province of Venezuela in the eighteenth century was mainly among secular owners. This can show that the devotion to a particular Catholic figure depended on individual preference, therefore the demand for texts related to Josephine veneration was higher among the secular population rather than the clergy. This is more notable in the case of the poem written by the poet and playwright José de Valdivielso, whose main audience was people outside the ecclesiastical sphere. The Josephine sources used by the clergy could have been others, such as texts and homilies in their original language (Latin, French) or the Holy Scriptures. The *Flos sanctorum*, for instance, was a more general treatise that can be used in a great variety of situations and therefore had equal ownership between religious and secular owners.

The feast of St. Joseph

The feast of St Joseph, every March 19th, is the only religious celebration specifically dedicated to the husband of the Virgin Mary and father of Jesus Christ. This particular date is believed to have been chosen due to a tradition that signaled this as the day of Joseph's death. It was not until 1621 that Pope Gregory XV established the date as the universal and mandatory feast of St. Joseph. By that time, the popularity of St. Joseph was on a clear ascent in the Spanish Empire.⁹⁴

In the particular case of Venezuela, mentions of the celebration or at least the recognition of the 19th of March as the day of St. Joseph can be encountered as early as 1608, more than a decade before the official establishment of the feast. The memorandum of the council of the Cathedral of Caracas on March 19th of 1608 mentions the celebration without describing how it was carried out.⁹⁵ The next mention of the celebration is 100 years after, on March 19th, 1709, saying only: "On the day of the patriarch lord Saint Joseph, the 19th of the same [month], the blessing and dedication feast was made with all solemnity, with the Governor being informed beforehand."⁹⁶ It can be argued that the difference of 100 years between these two mentions of St. Joseph's feast shows that the celebration of that date was a usual practice for the clergy and the believers, and for that reason was not explicitly mentioned every single March 19th.

In 1687, the constitutions written during the third Synod of Caracas had a list of religious festivities that should be followed by every church in the Dioceses. The list included the feast of St. Joseph on March 19th. This particular ecclesiastical document had validity in the

⁹⁴ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 34.

⁹⁵ *Actas Del Cabildo Eclesiastico de Caracas. Compendio Cronologico* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1963), Tome I, 48.

⁹⁶ *Actas Del Cabildo Eclesiastico de Caracas. Compendio Cronologico*, Tome I, 223. "el día del patriarca señor San Joseph, 19 del mismo se hiciese la bendición y fiesta de dedicación con toda solemnidad participándose antes al señor Gobernador."

Venezuelan territory for a long time: from his promulgation in 1687 until 1904, a total of 207 years.⁹⁷

Other evidence of the celebration of St. Joseph's feast can be found in the report made by Bishop Mariano Martí during his Pastoral Visit. After asking what kind of religious celebrations were organized in Valencia in 1782, the answer was that the only celebration apart from Easter was the feast of St. Joseph paid for by two neighbors of the towns.⁹⁸ Comparably, the *Obra Pia* dedicated to the Holy Souls of Purgatory of the town of San Sebastian de Los Reyes was obligated to pay for the candles of every Monday mass and the feast of St. Joseph every year.⁹⁹

Unfortunately, so far it has not been possible to find any account or detailed description of how the feast of St. Joseph was celebrated within the territory of the province of Venezuela. Yet the festivity should not have been so different from the one celebrated in other colonial cities with a clear difference in scope and number of participants. In Lima, the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, the confraternities dedicated to the saint made the celebration and the churches rang their bells on the same day and the day before. In the periods when the viceroy had Saint Joseph as his patron, the feast acquired greater importance with the participation of church and state officials.¹⁰⁰ In the Viceroyalty of New Spain, the feast was treated as a religious celebration of the highest class because the saint was designated as the patron of New Spain.¹⁰¹ The feast was celebrated with an octave, which is a "repeated celebration which occurs eight days from the appointed feast day as a means of increasing the importance of the event."¹⁰² This importance was also reflected by the composition of music played during the feast. The three Latin music

⁹⁷ *Constituciones Sinodales del Obispado de Venezuela, Santiago de León de Caracas* (Caracas, 1761), 330.

⁹⁸ Martí, *Obispo Mariano Martí*, Tome II, 415.

⁹⁹ Martí, Tome VII, 266.

¹⁰⁰ Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, Monarquía y Poder*, 52.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Mason, "Te, Joseph, Celebrent: An Examination and Guide to Manuel de Sumaya's Works for the Feast of St. Joseph at the Cathedral of Mexico City, 1714-1715" (Illinois, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2021), 10.

¹⁰² Mason, 11.

pieces written by Manuel de Sumaya in 1714 are good examples of this.¹⁰³ Therefore, it can be said that the celebration of St. Joseph's feast had special enthusiasm in the provinces, towns, and haciendas that had him as their patron saint.

¹⁰³ Mason, 3.

Chapter 2: St. Joseph as an example of fatherhood



Figure 4 - Juan Pedro López, *The Holy Family with St. Joachim, St. Anna, and the Eternal Father*, 1765-1670. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)

The painting above is composed of various layers and elements such as the Holy Family with St. Anne, St. Joachim, and the Eternal Father. Each of these elements will be discussed in the present chapter, which focuses on the centrality of the Holy Family and the role of St. Joseph as the earthly father of Jesus. Because of the motifs presented, this painting is an excellent starting point for addressing issues related to the father-child relationship and the role of men in the household in late colonial Venezuela, and the question of how St. Joseph could have been a role model in these aspects.

The medium-sized painting, measuring 83.7 x 54.5 cm, is attributed to Juan Pedro Lopez (1724–1787), one of the most prolific painters in Caracas during the late colonial period. The estimated date of creation is between 1765 and 1770, and it is associated with other paintings of the Holy Family and Saint Joseph by the same painter and from the same period.¹⁰⁴ Stylistically, Lopez's work was clearly influenced by Mexican paintings of the time, while simultaneously, he was a great influence on the style and techniques of other artists from Caracas and the rest of the province.¹⁰⁵ He was also a sculptor and gilder, with close ties to local religious institutions. As a result, many of his works can be found in various churches throughout Venezuela, some of which are dedicated to St. Joseph. Lopez produced many paintings that followed the same composition of the image presented, with a predominance of depictions of St. Joseph holding the sleeping infant Jesus, either accompanied by the Virgin Mary on one side, or just the saint looking at the viewer.

The relative popularity, their relatively small size, and their current location in private collections suggest that the majority of these types of depictions were destined to be part of the

¹⁰⁴ Duarte, *Juan Pedro López*, 1996, 267.

¹⁰⁵ Carlos F. Duarte, «Juan Pedro López», *Diccionario de Historia de Venezuela* (blog), 1997, <https://bibliofep.fundacionempresapolar.org/dhv/entradas/l/lopez-juan-pedro/#temporaryDirectBibliography>.

private devotions of wealthy families.¹⁰⁶ The repetition of this pictorial model dedicated to St. Joseph and the Holy Family points to the existence of a market in the province of Venezuela that demanded this type of representation. This market was at its peak in Venezuela in the second half of the eighteenth century, a late development compared to other parts of the Spanish Empire. As a point of comparison, in Spain the production of Josephine imagery began with El Greco (1541-1614) and reached its peak in the seventeenth century with the work of Bartolome Estaban Murillo (1617-1687).¹⁰⁷ Many of the Josephine compositions created by Spanish artists were imitated by other artists in Spain and other parts of the Spanish Empire. In New Spain, the development of Josephine imagery in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries followed the models of the Spanish artists but added new elements to the composition. Juan Correa (1646-1716) and Miguel Cabrera (1695-1768) were the greatest exponents of the depiction of Saint Joseph in New Spain.¹⁰⁸ Artists in Hispanic America “reconceptualized Joseph as an important figure, and they gave him an increasingly substantial role in their images, placing greater compositional importance on his figure and representing him as the youthful, physically robust, diligent head of the Holy Family.”¹⁰⁹ It has been argued that this recontextualization changed Joseph’s role in depictions of the Holy Family, which could also indicate a shift in the cult of the figure: instead of considering Joseph as a secondary figure, he became a central component alongside the more developed roles of Mary and Jesus.¹¹⁰

Lopez’s image of the Holy Family (Figure 4) is a great example of the model of the Christian family diffused throughout the Spanish colonies that gave a new role to Joseph. These new ideas were disseminated through religious paintings to a largely illiterate audience. At the

¹⁰⁶ Duarte, *Juan Pedro López*, 1996, 209-13.

¹⁰⁷ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Villaseñor Black, 94.

¹⁰⁹ Villaseñor Black, 14.

¹¹⁰ For a more detailed explanation of this see Anne L. Williams, “Satirizing the Sacred: Humor in Saint Joseph’s Veneration and Early Modern Art,” *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 10 (Winter 2018), and Richardson, Carol M. “St. Joseph, St. Peter, Jean Gerson and the Guelphs,” *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 2012).

center, Jesus, Joseph, and Mary take up an equal amount of space in the composition. However, only St. Joseph is holding Jesus, giving him greater significance on account of his closeness to the Incarnation of God. In the background and margins, Sts. Anna and Joachim are looking at the sleeping child with veneration. Lopez painted both saints more darkly and roughly, clearly indicating their secondary role. At the top of the composition, God and the Holy Spirit complete the depiction of the Holy Trinity. This showcases the duality between the Holy Trinity and the Earthly Trinity (Mary, Joseph, Jesus), united by the figure of Jesus Christ.

In this chapter, I argue that Juan Pedro Lopez's representation of the Holy family in this painting showcases the main elements of the new ideas around St. Joseph's role in late eighteenth-century Hispanic America. Three main features of this painting will be analyzed in order to assert their incidence in these changes in Joseph's role: in the first place, Joseph's closeness to Jesus and his implied relevance within the Catholic pantheon; secondly, the portrayed relationships among the members of the Holy Family, and finally, the roles of supporting figures such as Sts. Anne and Joachim. After these three sections, I will explore the question of how St. Joseph was presented as a model of fatherhood to the believers of the province of Venezuela in the second half of the eighteenth century.

St. Joseph's closeness to Jesus

In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America, the figure of St. Joseph depicted in religious paintings had two main characteristics that allowed any observer to recognize him: the flowered staff¹¹¹ and the closeness to the infant Jesus.

¹¹¹ There is no standard way to refer to the St. Joseph staff, which is often depicted with lillies at the top. For example, Charlene Villaseñor Black uses the term flowered staff, and Francis I. Filas uses the term blooming staff. In this study I will use these terms interchangeably. Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 30. Filas S.J., Francis L., *Joseph: the man closest to Jesus; the complete life, theology and devotional history of St. Joseph* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1962), 83-84.

The flowered staff represents an important scene in the account of the betrothal of Joseph and Mary as told in the Apocryphal Gospels: it is given to him by God as a sign indicating that Joseph is the Chosen One. According to the Protoevangelium of James, “a dove came out of the rod and flew onto Joseph’s head.”¹¹² In the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, “from the tip of the branch a dove emerged, brighter than snow, very beautiful, and after flying a long time around the top of the Temple, it went up to the heavens.”¹¹³ This particular scene was used in the late Middle Ages to represent the marriage of the Virgin Mary and Joseph, who holds a staff or branch from which flowers are blooming, and sometimes has a white dove near him. In the early modern period, the blooming staff was present in all depictions of the saint without any direct connection to the betrothal.

As mentioned before, after the Council of Trent, great changes took place in the way St. Joseph was represented and thought of. This included his paternal role within the Holy Family and his closeness to his adopted son. In the brief narrative of the virtues and life of St. Joseph contained in the *Flos Sanctorum* by Alonso de Villegas that circulated in the province of Venezuela, the privileged position of Joseph as the earthly father of Jesus is clear.

He was the first man who saw our Redeemer, and he adored Him, as soon as He was born. He deserved to hear the music of heaven, and the praise given by the Angels to the Virgin when she was born of God, and the rejoicings of the shepherds on the night of her Birth. She deserved to enjoy their conversation, day and night, dwelling in the same house, eating at the same table, eating the same food, and drinking from the same cup. And this not for a day, nor for a year, but ordinarily for many years. He deserved to hold the Son of God in his arms countless times. He embraced Him, and kissed Him, joining his face to his own. And it is even presumed that he rejoiced him with songs and games, with which children delight and rejoice: and the holy man became a child, rejoicing the child, son of God.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Bart D. Ehrman y Zlatko Pleše, eds., *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51.

¹¹³ Ehrman y Pleše, 91.

¹¹⁴ Alonso de Villegas, *Flos sanctorum y historia general en que se escribe la vida de la Virgen Sacratísima madre de dios, nuestra señora y la de los santos antiguos* (Toledo, 1583), 138. (Fue el primer varon que vido a nuestro Redentor, y le adoro, luego que fue nacido. Merecio oyr la musica del cielo, y la alvorada que dieron los Angeles

This idea of Joseph's role as the earthly father of Jesus was reinforced by the account given by the Carmelite Jerónimo Gracián in his *Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph*, in which the saint's holiness was demonstrated by the mutual affection that father and son had for each other.

Joseph never sinned mortally (as we will say later) and we know that love settles better in pure souls, and many times he touched and washed the feet, and kissed them, and not only feet, but hands, breasts, head, and mouth of the sweet Jesus, without him ever saying *Noli me tangere*, and he was kissed countless times with indescribable love and tenderness, of the eternal child.¹¹⁵

Pictorial representations of St. Joseph's closeness to Jesus had many variations within the Hispanic religious painting. There are compositions of Joseph walking, standing, and sitting, all of them next to Jesus.¹¹⁶ There are also those showing “Joseph embracing or guiding Jesus; Jesus seated on the saint's knee; Jesus kissing Joseph; Jesus with His arms around His earthly father's neck; the Child caressing Joseph's face or grasping his tunic; the Child asleep.”¹¹⁷ All of these types of depictions conveyed different messages to viewers, as the analysis below will show.

A few examples of late colonial Venezuelan depictions of Joseph seated and standing have survived to the present day. The following two paintings (Figures 5 and 6) are attributed to Juan

a la Virgen, rezien parida de Dios, y los regozijos de los pastores la noche de su Nacimiento. Merecio gozar de su conversacion, de dia y de noche, morando en una misma casa, comiendo a una mesa, y de un mismo manjar, y beviendo en un mismo vaso. Y esto no un día, ni un año, sino de ordinario muchos años. Merecio así mismo tener en sus brazos innumerables vezes al Hijo de dios. Abrazavale, besavale, juntando su rostro con el suyo. Y aun se presume que le regozijava con cantares y juegos, de que los niños se huelgan y regozijan: y se tornava niño el santo varon, regozijando al niño, hijo de Dios).

¹¹⁵ Jerónimo Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria* (Madrid, 1605), 51. (Joseph nunca peco mortalmente (como despues diremos) y sabemos que assienta mejor el amor en almas puras, y muchas vezes toco. y lavo los pies, y los beso, y no solo pies, sino manos, pechos, cabeza, y boca del dulcissimo Jesus, sin que jamas le dixesse *Noli me tangere*, y fue besado innumerables vezes inefable amor y ternura, del niño eterno).

¹¹⁶ Jorge Luis Merlo Solorio, «Entre paternidad y poderío. El patrocinio de san José: garante monárquico.», en *Devociones religiosas en México y Perú, siglos XVI-XVIII*, ed. Gisela von Wobeser, María Fernanda Mora Reyes, y Ramón Jiménez Gómez, Primera edición, Historia novohispana 113 (Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2021), 326.

¹¹⁷ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 90.

Pedro Lopez; the first was painted in 1777 and shows a seated Joseph, while the second was created sometime between 1760 and 1765 and shows a standing Joseph.¹¹⁸



Figure 5 - Juan Pedro López, *Saint Joseph and the sleeping Child*, 1777. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)



Figure 6 - Juan Pedro López, *Saint Joseph and the sleeping Child*, 1760-1765. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)

In both examples, baby Jesus sleeps peacefully in the arms of St. Joseph. Among the eight Venezuelan paintings of Joseph with Jesus that have survived to the present day, half depicts the child asleep, while the other half show an awake child, usually with his eyes turned toward the viewer. Whether with sleeping or waking Jesus, this type of depiction shows Joseph's paternal love for Jesus, but also the child's trust in his earthly father. For Jerónimo Gracián, this physical closeness and the act of sleeping on top of each other is a demonstration of love between father and son:

¹¹⁸ Duarte, *Juan Pedro López*, 1996.

And not only would Joseph sleep on the chest of Jesus, but countless times Jesus would fall asleep on the chest of Joseph, placing his divine mouth in front of his heart, robbing him, burning him, tearing him to pieces, and inflicting on him ineffable wounds of love: And Joseph would keep his sleep, Joseph contemplating the mysteries of Christ enclosed, securing more in love: and with the greatness of so high a prayer he would arrive at sleep, which in sacred scripture is called Tardemach, which is the stasis, or rapture, of which we will say something later.¹¹⁹

All the sculptures of St. Joseph exhibited in the altars of late colonial churches in the province of Venezuela show the saint at the side of Jesus, in some cases holding the child in one arm and in other cases guiding the child as they walk. The latter, known as the itinerant Joseph with the Child, is present only in a few sculptural examples found in a small number of Venezuelan altars.

For example, the main altar of the Church of St. Nicholas in the city of Coro, in the northwestern region of Venezuela, has a sculpture of the itinerant Joseph (Figure 7). The father and son are seen walking together, and the predominance of the floral staff can be read as a symbol "of the saint's duties as the guide, protector, and mentor of Christ."¹²⁰ Therefore, this representation of Joseph guiding Jesus could have expressed to the viewers that the role of every father is to guide his child. More insight into this paternal role as head of the household will be given in the next section. For now, it is important to understand that Joseph was depicted as the leader and protector of the Holy Family. Other pictorial analogies could have reinforced this portrayal, such as the Flight into Egypt, which shows Joseph leading the way.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 54 reverse. (Y no solo Joseph dormiría en el pecho de Jesus, pero innumerables vezes Jesus se adormecería sobre el pecho de Joseph, puesta su divina boca enfrente de su corazon, robandole, abrasandole, desmenuzandole, y haziendo en el inefables heridas de amor: y Joseph le guardaria el sueño, contemplando Joseph los misterios de Christo encerrados, asegurando mas en amor: y con la grandeza de tan alta oracion llegaria al sueño, que en la sagrada escritura se llama Tardemach, que es la estasis, o rapto, de quien despues diremos algo).

¹²⁰ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 96.

¹²¹ Villaseñor Black, 97.



Figure 7 - Main Altar St. Nicolas Church in the city of Coro (with close-up to St. Joseph sculpture) (G. Gasparini and C. Duarte. *Los retablos del periodo hispánico en Venezuela*. Caracas: Armitano, 1986)

The demonstration of the special closeness between Joseph and Jesus during childhood years was one of the justifications for placing St. Joseph very high in the hierarchy of saints. That Jesus followed the orders of his earthly father also demonstrates the importance of this figure as proposed by Jerónimo Gracián, quoting Isidore Isolanis' summary of the *Oriental History of Joseph* (also known as *The History of Joseph the Carpenter*). In this excerpt, Jesus states that

I always treated Joseph and spoke with him as if I were his own son, and in everything I resembled him, except that I was sinless. I called St. Joseph father, and he called Me son, and I obeyed St. Joseph an My mother in all that they commanded

Me. I never disobeyed any command of theirs, being obedient to them in everything, as children are to their parents.¹²²

Thanks to these ideas about Joseph's paternity and authority over Jesus, he was transformed in the early modern period into a powerful intercessor just behind the Virgin Mary.¹²³ According to Teresa de Avila, St. Joseph's intercession is powerful in every situation because of his paternal authority over Jesus: "He was subject to St. Joseph on earth—for since bearing the title of the father being the Lord's tutor, Joseph could give the Child commands— so in heaven God does whatever he commands."¹²⁴

The rise of St. Joseph as an active father, protector, and authority began with the works of medieval thinkers such as Jean Gerson, Bernardino da Siena, Bernardino de Feltre, and Isidore Isolani, who created a new Joseph that became popular in the early modern period. However, the virtues and characteristics of this new model were drawn from the cults of Mary and her mother Anne.¹²⁵ For this reason, according to art historian Villaseñor Black, the images created in the early modern period to express the special closeness between St. Joseph and Jesus were "consciously borrowed poses, gestures, and compositions previously reserved for images of Mary, ennobling the saint by implying his association with the Virgin."¹²⁶

St. Joseph's substitution of the Virgin for the throne of God is a good example of this transformation. The image of Jesus sitting on his foster father's lap or knee is very similar to

¹²² Jerónimo Gracián, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ: An Anthology of Readings from Jerónimo Gracián's Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph (1597)*, ed. Joseph F. Chorprenning (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's Univ. Press, 1995), 224; Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 187. (yo conversava con Joseph en todo, como si fuera su hijo, y en todo me parecia a el, salvo en aver tenido pecado original, y llamava a Joseph mi padre, y el me llamaba su hijo, y obedecia a mi madre y a Joseph, en todo lo que mandavan, que jamas quebrante uno de sus mandamientos).

¹²³ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 112; Ragon, «La promoción del culto a san José en Nueva España (siglos XVII y XVIII)», 410.

¹²⁴ *Collection Works of St. Teresa of Ávila* 1:53, quoted in Gracián, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ*, 30.

¹²⁵ Rosemary Drage Hale, «Joseph as Mother: adaptation and appropriation in the construction of male virtue», en *Medieval mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons y Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland Pub, 1996), 107.

¹²⁶ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 106.

the depictions of the Virgin as the Throne of Wisdom or *Sedes Sapientiae*.¹²⁷ The last part of Gracián's text lists the virtues of St. Joseph and one of them emphasizes that "St. Joseph, exercising the office of Throne, many times held in his arms and had seated on his lap the eternal Judge, Christ Jesus."¹²⁸ In addition, in Valdivielso's poem, there is a mention of how St. Joseph:

Make the Child's breast a soft pillow,
And the heart a furnace of love made
Bathe him with the beautiful sacred light,
With which he leaves the Father satisfied:
He steals Joseph's enamored soul,
And with his own enriches his chest,
Making him God's blissful throne,
Which equals to that of glory the most beautiful.¹²⁹

The function of the Virgin Mary as a throne allusion is showcased in Murillo's Madonna and Child (Figure 8), "which represents Jesus standing on His mother's lap, the shape of which resembles a throne for the divine Child, against a celestial setting."¹³⁰ Some Venezuelan examples show a representation of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph analogous to the one presented by contemporary Mexican artists. This portrayal can be interpreted as the Throne of God with a close-up of the upper part of the figures. The first is a painting attributed to Juan

¹²⁷ Villaseñor Black, 102.

¹²⁸ Gracián, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ*, 260; Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 206. (S, Joseph haziendo el oficio de Trono, tuvo muchas vezes en sus brazos, y sentado en si al juez eterno Christo Jesus).

¹²⁹ José de Valdivieso, *Vida, excelencia y muerte del glorioso patriarca y esposo de nuestra Señora San José* (Toledo, 1604), 234.

(Haze del pecho el Niño blanda almohada,
Y el corazon un horno de amor hecho
Le baña con la bella luz sagrada,
Con que dexa al del Padre satisfecho:
Roba a Joseph el alma enamorada,
Y con la suya le enriqueze el pecho,
Haziendole de Dios trono dichoso,
Que iguala a la de la gloria al mas hermoso).

¹³⁰ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 103.

Lovera (Figure 9) and the second was painted by Juan Pedro Lopez in Caracas (Figure 10).

Both were created at the end of the eighteenth century.



Figure 8 - Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *Madonna and Child*, 1655-60. (Charlene Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)



Figure 9 - Francisco Lovera, *St. Joseph and the Child*, 1795. (Alfredo Boulton, *Historia de la Pintura en Venezuela. Tomo I – Época colonial*. Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1964)



Figure 10 - Juan Pedro López, *Our Lady of the Rosary*, 18th century. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: *Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787*. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)

As can be seen in these three examples, the composition of the Infant Jesus on Joseph's lap follows the same compositional elements of the Virgin and Jesus. This type of representation could have expressed to the viewers that St. Joseph was on the same level as the Virgin because he was as close to the Incarnation of God as the Virgin Mary. Therefore, the existence of the same composition, both with a Marian version and a Josephine version, expresses that both have a privileged position for being the parents of Jesus Christ.

This high position as a privileged intercessor comparable to the Virgin Mary was a new element for the figure of St. Joseph. Throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, the figure of Joseph gradually undermined the previously exclusive Marian closeness to Jesus. In the following painting, we see a representation of the Holy Family by Juan Pedro Lopez with a peculiar feature: Mary is handing Jesus over to Joseph, and everyone is pleased with this action,

especially the happy child (Figure 11). And just as the mother delegated the care of the child to the father, the Church gave more responsibilities within the household to the paternal figure.

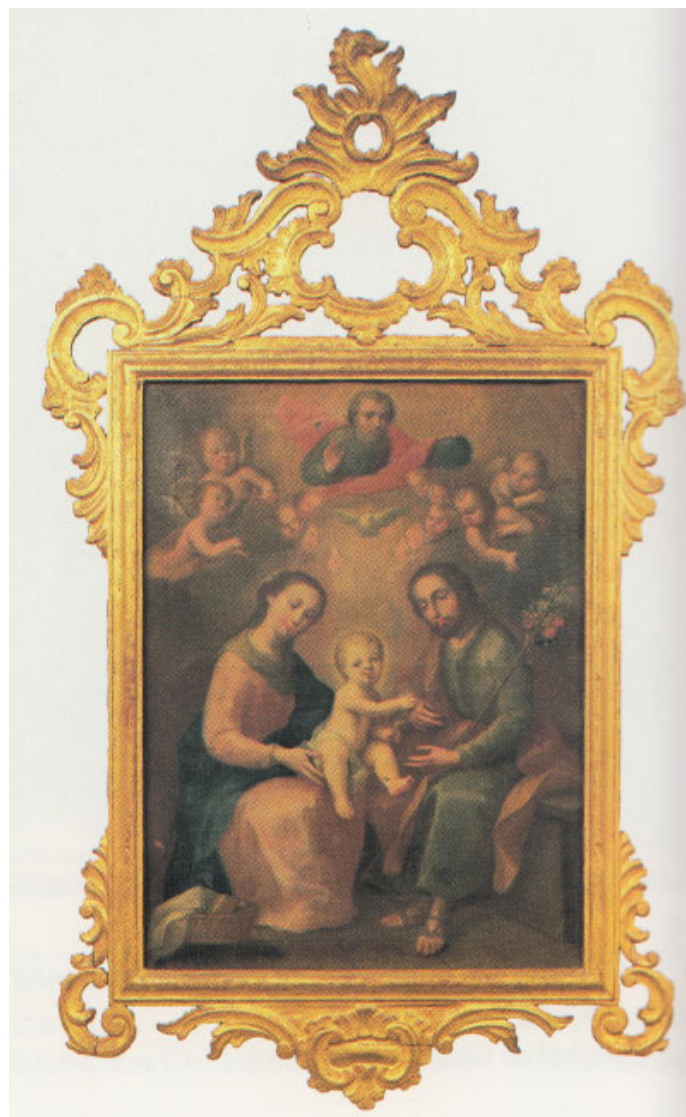


Figure 11 - Juan Pedro López, *The Holy Family with the eternal Father*, 1775-1780. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996).

Before concluding this section, it is also important to mention that all the paintings presented above, which were made in the province of Venezuela, show a youthful Joseph who is not more than fifty years old. This representation of St. Joseph as a middle-aged man, rather than a man in his late eighties, which was prevalent in the Middle Ages, was based on debates initiated in the fifteenth century by Jean Gerson, Bernardine of Siena, and Isidore Isolanis, who wondered how old St. Joseph was at the time of his marriage to Mary, at the time of the Nativity and

during the flight into Egypt.¹³¹ Jean Gerson, in several of his sermons, communicated that the age of St. Joseph at the time of his marriage and the raising of Jesus was between twenty-eight, considered the end of adolescence, and fifty, considered the beginning of old age. This age range justified Joseph's vigor and sufficient life experience to protect and guide Mary and Jesus at a vulnerable stage of their lives.¹³² Latin American depictions of St. Joseph fully and unquestioningly adopted this youthful model of the saint, as can be seen in all the pictorial examples presented in this and the following chapter.

This youthful version of St. Joseph, no more than 50 years old, seen in colonial paintings of St. Joseph in the province of Venezuela, bears a great physical resemblance to the images of Jesus Christ as an adult (Figures 4, 9, 11). This resemblance between the adoptive father and the adopted son could have been a way of reinforcing the idea of closeness between the two, despite their lack of blood ties. Likewise, this resemblance could have been a means of removing any doubt in the minds of believers and unbelievers that Joseph was the earthly father of Jesus. This physical resemblance between Joseph and Jesus will also be evident in the pictures of Joseph's deathbed presented in the next chapter.

St. Joseph as head of the family

The increased veneration of St. Joseph, as portrayed in religious paintings, did not replace Mary's importance as an intercessor. Instead, these depictions served to symbolically elevate St. Joseph's figure near the level of the Virgin. As such, the family, represented in paintings by the Holy Family made up of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, became a new center of attention for Catholic dogma.¹³³

¹³¹ Drage Hale, «Joseph as Mother: adaptation and appropriation in the construction of male virtue», 108.

¹³² Drage Hale, 109; Gracián, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ*, 104; Brain Patrick McGuire, «Becoming a Father and a Husband: St. Joseph in Bernard of Clairvaux and Jean Gerson», en *Joseph of Nazareth through the centuries*, ed. Joseph F. Chorprenning (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University, 2011), 55.

¹³³ Drage Hale, «Joseph as Mother: adaptation and appropriation in the construction of male virtue», 111.

The model of the family presented by the Church in the early modern period was very specific: it was the model of the nuclear family, in which the household was a unit of father, mother, and direct unmarried descendants. The Catholic Church established that the basic principles of this particular family model were unbreakable monogamous marriage, unquestionable paternal authority, gradual gradation in the enjoyment of privileges, and the sharing of responsibilities according to age, gender, and position within the family.¹³⁴

This model of the nuclear family was imposed on colonial settlements in Hispanic America. Despite the great diversity of family structures that may have existed in colonial America because of its inherent diversity of ethnic, economic, and social conditions, families had to adapt to the Tridentine Christian pattern of the nuclear family.¹³⁵ In the case of eighteenth-century Venezuela, after two centuries of colonization and evangelization, the implementation of the nuclear family model in the province was relatively successful. According to the historian Juan Almécija, for the period 1745-1798, 78.5% of the 10,712 households he studied fell into the category of nuclear families, while only 10.6% were extended families.¹³⁶

It is important to note, however, that the predominance of nuclear families in late colonial Venezuela was made possible not only by the pressure exerted by the Church, but also by favorable economic, legal, and spatial conditions. In the legal and social aspects of the formation of nuclear families, two practices played a key role: the equal division of inheritances among all heirs¹³⁷ and the obligation to leave the paternal homes after marriage in order to establish oneself independently. In addition, the formation of a new household was supported

¹³⁴ Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, «Perspectiva de la historia de la familia en América Latina», *Op. Cit. Revista del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas*, n.º 6 (1991): 80.

¹³⁵ Gonzalbo Aizpuru, 79.

¹³⁶ Juan Almécija Bermúdez, *La Familia en la Provincia de Venezuela, 1745-1798*, Colecciones MAPFRE 1492 14 (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992), 127.

¹³⁷ In colonial Venezuela, the inheritance was divided equally among all the descendants without distinction of sexes; a transfer that frequently occurred when the children decided to get married. Almécija Bermúdez, 134.

by favorable economic conditions, since the economy in the province of Venezuela was in full expansion at the end of the eighteenth century and therefore the supply of labor was sufficient. If the young family lived in urban settlements, the members of the household could devote themselves to public or commercial work. On the other hand, if they lived in the countryside, they could be employed as day laborers or rent a piece of land.¹³⁸

The Catholic Church presented its Christian conception of the nuclear family as a guide to ensure procreation on the one hand and the education of new generations in Christian values and traditions on the other. To achieve this goal, it was necessary for the family to be relatively stable and for parents to be at the service of their children.¹³⁹ Therefore, the figure of the head of the family was necessary to ensure stability and education within the family. In colonial Venezuela, the clergy defined this role as "padre de familia" (father of the family) in the Synod of Caracas in 1689.¹⁴⁰

Book II, Title XIX, of the *Synodal Constitutions of Caracas*, is dedicated to the responsibilities of the father of the family as head of the household. This authority figure is defined as follows:

They are the fathers of families in their homes, justices to distribute to each one of their own what belongs to them. They are, in a certain way, prelates to teach, warn and guide those of their families, so that no one is unaware of what they should do and what they should flee from. They are lookouts. They are sentinels who must keep watch over the occasions of their children, servants, and slaves, in order to correct the misfortunes they may have.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Almécija Bermúdez, 133-34.

¹³⁹ Almécija Bermúdez, 159.

¹⁴⁰ In 1689, the Synod of Caracas was held and establish a constitution that had to be follow by all the parishes of the dioceses. The text indicated how to live in the right way in order to be a good Christian. According to the Council of the Indies, the text was scrupulous and gave a good doctrine, reasons that lead to its publication with the license of Charles II. Its success was such that in 1761, the Bishop Diez Madroñero ordered to reprint the constitutions with the license of Charles III. Elías Pino Iturrieta, *Contra Lujuria, Castidad. Historias de pecado en el siglo XVIII venezolano* (Caracas: Alfadil Ediciones, 1992), 16.

¹⁴¹ Diego de Baños y Sotomayor, *Constituciones Sinodales del Obispado de Venezuela y Santiago de León de Caracas. Hechas en la santa iglesia catedral de dicha ciudad de Caracas, en el año del señor de 1687*. (Caracas: Juan Carmen Martel, 1848), 187. (Son los padres de familias en sus casas, justicias para distribuir á cada uno de los suyos lo que les toca. Son en cierto modo, prelados para enseñar, advertir y encaminar á los de su familia: de

The father of the family had an educational function similar to that of the clergy and secular authority; however, his power was directed toward the private space within the household that he headed. This private authority applied not only to the father's descendants but also to his servants and slaves, if he had any.

God made them fathers of families, so that with reciprocal love and according to good rules of justice, as they receive from their children, servants and slaves, honor, service, obedience and reverence, they reciprocate them with good breeding, teaching, support and care of their persons, trying to leave their children richer in virtues than in temporal goods, and that their servants and slaves feel more their death or lack, for the good services, than that of their own parents by nature.¹⁴²

The father of the family had the obligation to become the head of the family and to watch over his offspring, servants, and slaves. He had the responsibility to guide the rest of the family to follow God's law, which included receiving the holy sacraments, attending mass every Sunday, and observing religious feasts.¹⁴³ In this way, the head of the family ensured that his relatives and vassals were exposed to the doctrines taught in the Church by the clergy. Depending on the situation, this obligation could be carried out in a loving or harsh manner.

In the Holy Family, St. Joseph fulfilled the authority and educational functions of the head of the family within the household, and for this reason, he could have been used as a religious figure to show how fathers should behave. Without a doubt, Joseph of Nazareth is defined in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as the legitimate husband of Mary, even though she is a virgin, and he exercises the role of the protective father during Jesus' infancy.¹⁴⁴ According to

suerte, que ninguno ignore lo que debe obrar y lo que debe huir. Son atalayas. Son centinelas que deben velar sobre las ocasiones de sus hijos, criados y esclavos, para enmendar los descaminos que pueden tener).

¹⁴² Baños y Sotomayor, 188. (Halos hecho Dios padres de familias, para que con recíproco amor y segun buenas reglas de justicia, como reciben de sus hijos, criados y esclavos, el honor, el servicio, la obediencia y reverencia, ellos les correspondan con la buena crianza, doctrina, sustento y cuidado de sus personas, procurando dejar á sus hijos mas ricos de virtudes que de bienes temporales, y que sus criados y esclavos sientan mas su muerte ó falta, por los buenos oficios, que la de sus propios padres por naturaleza).

¹⁴³ Baños y Sotomayor, 188.

¹⁴⁴ Filas S.J., Francis L., *Joseph: the man closest to Jesus; the complete life, theology and devotional history of St. Joseph*, 20.

the New Testament, people who interacted with Jesus recognized Him as the son of Mary and Joseph the carpenter. This is exemplified when Jesus began to teach in the synagogue and the people began to ask who he was, many of them wondering: “Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude?”¹⁴⁵ Therefore, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus formed a family unit in which the head of the household was the position that God gives to every man.

In the early modern Hispanic context, Jerónimo Gracián argues that Joseph personified the God-given role of “padre de familia” within the family:

God ordered this betrothal, God was the matchmaker of this wedding, and the Lord himself (as his Apostle says) commanded that the husband be the head, commander, and ruler. And the wives (as St. Peter says) should be submissive, obedient, inferior to their husbands, and that in everything they should obey, respect, reverence, and do his will, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, Rachel obeyed Jacob, and so on. And since he ordained that Joseph should be the husband of Mary, it was his divine will that she should obey him, and that he should govern her, and command her as a father to his daughter, who in such possession he had her, as guardian to his ward, and less (which he calls him Andres Jerosolimitano) as husband to his wife, and true husband to his wife.¹⁴⁶

Gracián also explains that Joseph, as head of the Holy Family, had ten tasks to perform for his son: “No other saint was Jesus’ tutor, godfather, guardian, master, stepfather, adoptive father, the father of God’s family, the husband of Jesus’ mother, and the father of so many good works done for Jesus as was St. Joseph.”¹⁴⁷ In addition, on the other side of the coin, the adopted son reacted to all these demonstrations of paternal responsibility with reciprocity: “And for no other

¹⁴⁵ Matthew, 13: 55

¹⁴⁶ Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 33. (Dios ordeno este desposorio, Dios fue el casamentero de estas bodas, y mesmo Señor (como dize su Apostol) mando que el marido fuesse cabeza, mandasse, y governasse. Y las mugeres (como dize san Pedro) fuesseen subditas, obedientes, inferiores a sus maridos, y que en todo les obedezaca, respeten, reverencien, y hagan su voluntad, como Sara obedecio a Abraham, Rachel a Jacob, las de mas. y pues ordeno que Joseph fuesse marido de Maria, de su divina voluntad procedia que ella le obedeciesse, y que el la governasse, y mandasse como padre a hija, que en tal posesion la tenia, como tutor a su pupila, y meno (que assi le llama Andres Jerosolimitano) como esposo a su esposa, y verdadero marido a su muger).

¹⁴⁷ Gracián, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ*, 142.

saint than Joseph was Christ dependent, godson, student, charge, family member; none, except Joseph, was adopted and chosen by Jesus as His father.”¹⁴⁸ With this, Gracián wished to showcase the reciprocity of the father-child relationship and how each party had a role to fulfill. The father, as the one holding the authority, and the child, as the one that had to follow the authority.

Similarly, there are some mentions of Joseph's role as head of the family in Valdivielso's Josephine poem. This privilege was given to him because of his purity:

From this house, which with great skill
Manufactured the immortal wisdom,
Who deserved to be owner, and to be head
Of the human God, and virginal Mary?
Who but he who in his purity astonished
To the Sun that clothes the day with his light,
Of this house of God, husband of his Mother.¹⁴⁹

The first part of the verse alludes to Proverbs 24:3: "By wisdom, a house is built, and by understanding it is established. The legitimate marriage enables Joseph not only to be the protector of the Virgin Mary as the personification of the Church but also to be the guardian of the house built by the wisdom of God. This is why St. Joseph was presented as the head of the Holy Family, and with this important role, he was the guide, protector and provider of Mary and Jesus, at least during Jesus' childhood. Every Christian home should follow this structure: the father as protector and provider, the mother as procreator, and the children as future members of another Christian home.

¹⁴⁸ Gracián, 142.

¹⁴⁹ Valdivieso, *Vida, excelencia y muerte del glorioso patriarca y esposo de nuestra Señora San José*, 276. (De aquesta casa, que con gran destreza
Fabrico la inmortal sabiduria,
Quien merecio ser dueño, y ser cabeza
Del Dios humano, y virginal Maria?
Quien sino el que assombrando su pureza
Al Sol que viste de su luz el dia,
Desta casa de Dios, esposo de su Madre).

The extended family and God the Father

In the darker background of Juan Pedro Lopez's *Holy Family* (Figure 4), Jesus' grandparents gaze reverently at the sleeping child. This type of composition showing Jesus' extended family was derived from late medieval depictions of the Holy Family. These scenes depicted various members of the extended Holy Family: the grandparents, Anne and Joachim; the parents, Mary and Joseph; and the aunts, Mary's half-sisters with their husbands and children.¹⁵⁰ Late medieval scenes gave special significance to the matrilineal descent of Jesus, showing the extended family of the Virgin Mary and St. Anne. The grandmother of Jesus was a popular saint in sixteenth-century Spain. She was known as "the patron of the childless, women in childbirth, well as a universal intercessor capable of intervening during outbreaks of the plague or threatening weather."¹⁵¹

After the Council of Trent, the popularity of St. Anne in Spain decreased exponentially and the representation of the grandparents in the Holy Family became less frequent. This change is linked to the transformation of the Holy Family and the more relevant role of St. Joseph in the household. From the seventeenth century on, the nuclear family and the authority of the paternal figure were emphasized in Catholic dogma. The depiction of the Holy Family primarily showed the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and the Child Jesus, with the focus in most cases on St. Joseph holding Jesus or at least positioning him on the same level as the Virgin, never in a secondary position or the background. Good examples of this in early modern Spain are the works of Murillo, who depicted a patriarchal nuclear Holy Family in many of his paintings.¹⁵² With the disappearance of St. Anne from Holy Family depictions, St. Joseph took over all the spiritual functions previously assigned to Jesus' grandmother. For this reason, he was transformed into

¹⁵⁰ Charlene Villaseñor Black, «St. Anne Imagery and Maternal Archetypes in Spain and Mexico», en *Colonial saints: discovering the holy in the Americas, 1500-1800*, ed. Allan Greer y Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.

¹⁵¹ Villaseñor Black, 4.

¹⁵² Villaseñor Black, 8.

a saint with extensive and extraordinary powers, like the Virgin Mary,¹⁵³ and became the patron saint of woodworkers, infertile women, mothers in childbirth, and the protector against storms, particularly in Hispanic contexts.¹⁵⁴

Although depictions of the extended Holy Family disappeared in Spain by the seventeenth century, the grandparents of Jesus were still present in some depictions of the Holy Family in the Americas. This type of depiction of the extended Holy Family was called The Five Lords (Los Cinco Señores) and was particularly popular in colonial Mexico. In some Mexican examples, St. Anne and the Virgin Mary are given special prominence, leaving St. Joseph and St. Joachim in the background. According to art historian Black Villaseñor, “only about half of extant colonial Mexican Holy Family depictions privilege Sr. Joseph as paterfamilias in the manner of Spanish representations.”¹⁵⁵

In the case of eighteenth-century Venezuela, depictions of the Five Lords were scarce. One of the two examples found in Venezuela is the painting presented at the beginning of this chapter (Figure 4), and the other is a depiction entitled *The Complete Holy Family*, dating from the mid-eighteenth century by an unknown painter (figure 12).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Charles Webster, «Paracelsus Confronts the Saints: Miracles, Healing and the Secularization of Magic», *Social History of Medicine* 8, n.º 3 (1995): 404, <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/8.3.403>.

¹⁵⁴ Villaseñor Black, «St. Anne Imagery and Maternal Archetypes in Spain and Mexico», 13.

¹⁵⁵ Villaseñor Black, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Duarte, *Pintura e iconografía popular de Venezuela*, 29.



Figure 12 - Anonymous, *The Complete Holy Family*, Second Half of the 18th century. (Carlos Duarte. *Pintura e Iconografía Popular de Venezuela*. Caracas: Ernesto Armitano Editor, 1978).

Neither painting gives much importance to Jesus' grandparents, who are always in the background. Another interesting point is that neither gives much importance to Saint Joseph as a paternal figure. In fact, the vast majority of depictions of the Holy Family in late colonial Venezuela follow these two paintings, usually showing the paternal and maternal figures at the same level. The only sign of prominence given to St. Joseph was the privilege of holding the child in his arms, as mentioned in the previous section of this chapter. This shows an attempt to promote the paternal presence in the household so that the role of each member of the nuclear family was equally important.

However, if the importance was to depict the nuclear family model and deemphasize the extended family model, why were there still representations of the Five Lords in the second half of the eighteenth century? In the province of Venezuela, the answer could be related to the

persistence of the extended family, even though the vast majority of Venezuelan families followed the nuclear model.

As mentioned above, only 10.6% of the more than ten thousand households analyzed by Juan Almécija can be classified as extended.¹⁵⁷ This type of family was more common depending on the job of the head of the family and the wealth of the family. Agrarian families with large estates were more likely to be organized into extended families.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, the few representations of the extended Holy Family might reflect how uncommon the formation of the extended family was in Venezuela and, consequently, the participation of grandparents or other family members in the education of the children. In contrast, the Catholic Church focused on promoting mother-child and father-child relationships.

Another important feature of the analyzed painting is the upper part, which shows God the Father and the Holy Spirit watching over the Holy Family. For this reason, this particular painting can be classified as a composition showing the two trinities: the heavenly and the earthly both united by Jesus Christ.

In the late Middle Ages, Jean Gerson was the first theologian to refer to Joseph, Mary, and Jesus as the "Earthly Trinity." However, he did not directly compare this figure to the Holy Trinity. That comparison would be made by other authors inspired by Gerson's early Josephine works.¹⁵⁹ Jerónimo Gracián was also influenced by Gerson's work, as evidenced in his explanation of the similarities between the two trinities in the prologue of his Josephine text:

He who gave us on earth such three persons, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Mary resembles the Father, in that she is the mother of Jesus, and conceived him in her womb, as the eternal Father begat him from her womb, before he raised the morning

¹⁵⁷ Almécija Bermúdez, *La Familia en la Provincia de Venezuela, 1745-1798*, 127.

¹⁵⁸ Almécija Bermúdez, 137.

¹⁵⁹ Joseph F. Chorprenning, «St. Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative: Christophorus Blancus's Engravings for the Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph (1597)», en *Joseph of Nazareth through the centuries*, ed. Joseph F. Chorprenning (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University, 2011), 111.

light. Jesus is the same divine Word, who is born of the Mother as man, and as eternal God the Father. Joseph is like the Holy Spirit, in being the spouse of his own wife Mary, and the one who comforts, animates, accompanies, recreates, and consoles Mary and Jesus.¹⁶⁰

In the same way, in Valdivieso's poem, there is the same analogy between the two trinities:

He will see a new Trinity that he admires,
Of one God, and three beautiful persons,
In whom the Trinity of God looks
Joyful in the beauty that looks on them:
One is she who reports to God's wrath,
Who begot Him who is the Creator of the stars
Who is God the Son of the virginal Mother,
Mother of God, and wife of his Father.
Another is the Eternal Word, which is the Son
Born of her who is God's pleasure,
a word that the Eternal Father said
In the beginning without him he has given him:
Another is Joseph, which is joy, and rejoicing
Of her that begetteth, and of him that is begotten
For it proceeds from loving each other so much,
That his soul may be a Holy Spirit.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 1. (que nos dio en la tierra tales tres personas, Jesus, Maria, y Joseph. Maria se parece al Padre, en que es madre de Jesus, y le concibio en sus entrañas, como el Padre eterno le engrendo de su vientre, antes que criasse el luzero de la mañana. Jesus es el mesmo Verbo divino, que nace de la Madre en quanto hombre, y en quanto Dios eterno Padre. Joseph se parece al Espíritu Santo, en ser esposo de su mesma esposa Maria, y el que conforta, anima, acompaña, recrea, y consuela a Maria, y a Jesus).

¹⁶¹ Valdivieso, *Vida, excelencia y muerte del glorioso patriarca y esposo de nuestra Señora San José*, 260.

(Vera una nueva Trinidad que admira,
De un solo Dios, y tres personas bellas,
En quien la Trinidad de Dios se mira
Gozosa en la beldad que mira en ellas:
Una es la que reporta a Dios la ira,
Que engendro al que es Criador de las estrellas
Que es de Dios Hijo la virginal Madre,
Madre de Dios, y esposa de su Padre.
Otra es el Verbo Eterno, que es el Hijo
Nacido de la que es de Dios agrado,
palabra que el Eterno Padre dixo
En el principio que sin él le ha dado:
Otra es Joseph, que es gozo, y regozijo
De la que engendra, y del que es engendrado
Pues procede de amarse los dos tanto,
Que sea su alma un Espíritu Santo).

This comparison between the earthly and heavenly trinity was part of the effort to elevate the Holy Family as the ideal Christian family, and Hispanic representations of this motif showcase this intention. As such, the connection between the two trinities was made clear to viewers in the depictions of God watching over Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus. The most notable Spanish works of art depicting the two trinities are those painted by Esteban Murillo at the end of the seventeenth century (Figure 13).¹⁶² Another example is the 1690 Peruvian depiction of the heavenly and earthly Trinity attributed to the circle of Diego Quispe Tito (Figure 14).¹⁶³ There are some similarities with the representations of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in Juan Pedro Lopez's pieces of the Holy Family (Figures 4 and 11), such as God's red cloth and his open arm toward the Holy Family, offering divine protection. It is interesting to note that in each of Lopez's depictions of the Holy Family, it appears as an essential element of the composition.

¹⁶² Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 73.

¹⁶³ Chorpénning, «St. Joseph as Guardian Angel, Artisan, and Contemplative: Christophorus Blancus's Engravings for the Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph (1597)», 111.



Figure 13 - Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities*, 1681. (Site: <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/bartolome-esteban-murillo-the-heavenly-and-earthly-trinities>)



Figure 14 - The Circle of Diego Quispe Tito, *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities*, 1690. (Joseph F. Chorpennning (ed.) *Joseph of Nazareth through the Centuries*. Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University, 2011)

The permanence of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in these images expresses the omnipresence of God, who not only chose Mary to be the mother of His Son, but also chose Joseph to be the earthly father of Jesus. For Villegas, this was the greatest honor Joseph received from God: “The eternal Father honored St. Joseph more than any other man of his time, for he chose him to be the tutor of his only son, and allowed the Mother to call him the father of her Son.”¹⁶⁴ It can be said that these images of the Heavenly Trinity and the Earthly Trinity (Figures 4, 11, 12, 13, 14) show two types of paternal filiation of Christ. There is the vertical line: Jesus Christ as God the Son, the offspring of God the Father and the second person of the Trinity.

¹⁶⁴ Villegas, *Flos sanctorum y historia general en que se escribe la vida de la Virgen Sacratísima madre de dios, nuestra señora y la de los santos antiguos*, 138. (Honro al Padre eterno a San joseph, mas que a otro hombre de su tiempo, pues le escogio para ayo de su hijo unico, y permitio que la Madre le llamasse padre de su Hijo).

And the horizontal line: Jesus Christ as the biological son of Mary and the adoptive son of Joseph, in other words, with a filiation that is not bodily but rather social and spiritual.

Chapter 3: St. Joseph as an example of good death

“When you go to bed at night, think that you may not be alive the next morning.”¹⁶⁵ These ominous words, published in an eighteenth-century manual of Christian life are attributed to Venezuelan Bishop Diego Antonio Díez Madroñero, and can provide insight into the concept of death and its acceptance in the early modern period. This is one of many ideas about death that testify to the importance of modern Western societies of being aware of the existence and presence of death. This knowledge gave the dying person and his or her loved ones some control over the event of death and a chance to die appropriately. Thus, the person who is about to die and accepts his condition has the opportunity to prepare himself in various ways, either by reconciling with his loved ones who are alive, making confessions, receiving blessings, or preparing his memories and inheritance. Therefore, to ensure a good death, it was necessary to be aware of one's condition and avoid a state of denial.¹⁶⁶

Díez Madroñero's brief passage, however, was not the only reminder of the presence and proximity of death in late colonial Venezuela. At that time, death was made present in certain places and moments, such as the cemeteries and tombs in local churches, the ringing of bells to announce a funeral, the mourning clothes worn by neighbors and family members, the representations of purgatory and the Last Judgment on church altars, the requests to pray to the Holy Souls in purgatory and to buy bulls for the deceased, and the celebration of festivals dedicated to the dead.¹⁶⁷ The message was clear: the population was to be reminded that no one

¹⁶⁵ Diego Antonio Díez Madroñero, *Consejos y Reglas de Vivir Cristianamente* (Caracas: Archivo General de Indias, 1766), 225. (Quando te acuestas por la noche piensa que quizá no estarás vivo la mañana siguiente).

¹⁶⁶ Leen Van Brussel y Nico Carpentier, *The Social Construction of Death: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 109.

¹⁶⁷ It is clear that these elements are not unique to the Venezuelan case; they have a cultural origin in the ideas and practices of the Middle Ages. On cemeteries, burials and mourning in medieval Europe, see Albrecht Classen, ed., *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, volume 16 (International Symposium on Medieval and Early Modern Studies, Berlin Boston: De Gruyter, 2016); Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick, eds., *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, Studies in the Humanities, v. 45 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999). On the idea of death and practices around death in medieval and early modern Spain, see Jaume Aurell i Cardona and Julia Pavón,

was free from death, which could come to anyone at any time, regardless of age, sex, or social position.

As I have shown, beliefs about death in colonial Venezuela relied heavily on saints and the Virgin Mary as intercessors after life on earth.¹⁶⁸ The Catholic promise of eternal life in heaven after a temporal purification of the soul in purgatory, initiated by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), was a way of controlling the behavior and actions of the living. The idea of death occupied a prominent place in the Baroque imagination as expressed in the religious art and literature of colonial America.¹⁶⁹ This Baroque imagination invited reflection on the constant presence of death and its daily proximity, to live correctly according to the teachings of the Church. In other words, the Catholic Church exhorted the faithful to live and die sinlessly, in order to guarantee the shortest possible time in Purgatory through the purification of venial sins, and then to live eternally in the glory of Heaven, thereby avoiding eternal condemnation in Hell.¹⁷⁰

In colonial Latin America, the pantheon of saints dedicated to interceding for the dying during the transition from temporal to eternal life was vast. For example, in the case of a painful death, the faithful could pray to St. Michael the Archangel or St. Anne; in the case of a sudden or

eds., *Ante La Muerte: Actitudes, Espacios y Formas En La España Medieval*, 1. ed, Colección Histórica (Pamplona: EUNSA Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2002); Fernando Martínez Gil, *Muerte y Sociedad En La España de Los Austrias*, 1. ed, Historia de Las Mentalidades (México, D.F: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1993). On the idea of death and practices around death in colonial Venezuela, see Alberta Zucchi, *Polvo Eres y En Polvo Te Convertirás: La Muerte y Su Entorno En Venezuela Hasta 1940* (Caracas: Antropologica, 2000).

¹⁶⁸ Guillermo Bisbal, «En camino a la salvación: Ideas escatológicas y prácticas mortuorias en la Caracas de la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII (1760-1810)» (Undergraduate thesis, Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2018), 97.

¹⁶⁹ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 146.

¹⁷⁰ On the origins and spread of the idea of heaven, hell and purgatory throughout the Catholic world, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife*, First Simon&Schuster trade paperback edition (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2021); Gisela von Wobeser, *Cielo, infierno y purgatorio durante el virreinato de la Nueva España*, 2015; Georges Minois y Godofredo González, *Historia de los infiernos*, 1a ed (Barcelona: Paidós, 2005); Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Aldershot, England: Scholar Press, 1990).

violent death, they could pray to St. Adrian or St. Barbara, among others.¹⁷¹ In this sanctorale, however, only St. Joseph was considered the patron of a good death, which was the key to securing eternal life in heaven and avoiding hell. Because of this role, he was considered the most effective figure to ensure a good transition from the temporal to the eternal realm.¹⁷²

This chapter aims to exemplify the role of Saint Joseph in Latin America by exploring the use of his figure as a patron of the good death. To analyze this phenomenon, the case of eighteenth-century Venezuela will be used. I discuss this case in a three-part structure: the first section will be concerned with a definition of the good death in eighteenth-century Venezuela using two *Ars Moriendi* that circulated in the province. The second section will analyze the origin and relevance of St. Joseph as the patron of the good death, tracing this idea from the apocryphal text of the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* to Jerónimo Gracián's *Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph*. The final section will be an exploration of how St. Joseph was presented to the faithful in late colonial Venezuela as an exemplary model of the good death, presenting images produced in the province and devotional books that were present in local libraries.

The idea of good death

Life in colonial Latin America was relatively short; consequently, most believers spent most of their lives preparing for death. Their goal was not to have just any death, but a death that would guarantee that they would die properly and thus enjoy eternity in the heavenly paradise. In this sense, in order to be aware of how to achieve a good death, manuals or methods circulated among believers to showcase the process of "good death." These manuals were called *Ars*

¹⁷¹ Sánchez Reyes, «San José, esperanza de los enfermos y patrono de los moribundos; un eficaz remedio durante el tránsito de la muerte», 294.

¹⁷² Sánchez Reyes, 300; Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 145.

Moriendi or *Ars Bene Moriendi*. In the Hispanic world, this literary genre could be called *Artes moriendi*, "Preparations for a Good Dying" or "Preparations for a Good Death."¹⁷³

The first Latin versions of the *Ars Moriendi* were produced in the fifteenth century, first in manuscript and soon after in printed form. Generally speaking, many art historians and historians agree that the primary text had two versions, one long with six chapters and the other short with illustrations accompanying the main ideas.¹⁷⁴ Both were focused on explaining how to fight the dangerous temptations experienced by the *moriens* -the person dying- before the soul was definitively separated from the body.

Ars Moriendi became an archetype of a pastoral literary genre that was very prolific from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.¹⁷⁵ During this period, not only was the Latin *Ars Moriendi* widely disseminated, but translations into vernacular languages and reinterpretations by theologians of different backgrounds also began to appear. This indicates that the *Ars Moriendi* in its various versions and translations had a wide audience, from priests and confessors to any Christian believer concerned with his or her own death. However, the main recipients of this type of text were the assistants or companions who cared for their dying family members and friends.¹⁷⁶ They could be clerics or lay people, men or women, who needed to know about

¹⁷³ Ildefonso Adeva Martín, «Ars bene moriendi. La muerte amiga», en *Ante la muerte: actitudes, espacios y formas en la España medieval*, ed. Jaume Aurell y Julia Pavón, Colección histórica (Pamplona: EUNSA Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2002), 296.

¹⁷⁴ Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi* (New York: AMS Press, 1966); Adeva Martín, «Ars bene moriendi. La muerte amiga»; Fernando Martínez Gil, «Del modelo medieval a la Contrarreforma: La clericalización de la muerte», en *Ante la muerte: actitudes, espacios y formas en la España medieval*, ed. Jaume Aurell y Julia Pavón, Colección histórica (Pamplona: EUNSA Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2002), 215-54; Donald F. Duclow, «Dying Well: The Ars moriendi and the Dormition of the Virgin», en *Death and dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck y Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 379-429.

¹⁷⁵ Adeva Martín, «Ars bene moriendi. La muerte amiga», 303.
Duclow, «Dying Well: The Ars moriendi and the Dormition of the Virgin», 380.

Christian doctrine and the spiritual struggles that develop in the agony of death, and this information was provided by the *Ars Moriendi* in any of its versions.¹⁷⁷

In eighteenth-century Venezuela, two manuals of the good death were present in the private libraries of religious and lay owners.¹⁷⁸ One of these good death manuals that circulated in Venezuela was that of Antonio Arbiol (1651-1726), entitled *Visiting the Sick, and the Holy Exercise of Aiding in Well-Dying* (Visita de enfermos, y ejercicio santo de ayudar a bien morir), with 21 editions between 1722 and 1837.¹⁷⁹ The text served as a guide on how to die according to the precepts of the Catholic religion, from visiting and caring for the sick to comforting the relatives and friends of the deceased. Arbiol was a Spanish Franciscan friar who carried out all his ecclesiastical duties in his hometown of Zaragoza and was the author of texts on Christian morality, education and care of the sick.¹⁸⁰

The other good death manual that circulated in Venezuela was written by Baltasar Bosch de Centellas y Cardón (1645-1714),¹⁸¹ entitled *Practice of Visiting the Sick and Assisting them in Dying Well* (Prácticas de visitar los enfermos y ayudar a bien morir), which went through 39 editions between 1687 and 1897. On the title page of the fourth edition, the author announced

It contains pious and salutary warnings and documents against the deceitful wiles of the common enemy; and many Holy Prayers, Protests, Soliloquies, and fervent prayers of Acts of Contrition, of Faith, Hope, and Love of God, to help those who in their last agonies usually lack all consolation.

¹⁷⁷ Adeva Martín, «Ars bene moriendi. La muerte amiga», 300.

¹⁷⁸ In previous research, I determined the circulation of these two manuals of good death in the province of Venezuela based on the lists of library inventories collected by Soriano (1999) and Leal (2014). Antonio Arbiol's text had a total of 7 owners, 3 secular and 4 ecclesiastical. Bosch de Centelles y Cardona's text had a total of 6 owners, 1 secular and 5 ecclesiastical. Bisbal, «En camino a la salvación: Ideas escatológicas y prácticas mortuorias en la Caracas de la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII (1760-1810)», 67.

¹⁷⁹ Adeva Martín, «Ars bene moriendi. La muerte amiga», 356.

¹⁸⁰ Directorio Franciscano, «ARBIOL Y DÍEZ, Antonio», en *Pequeña Enciclopedia Franciscana*, s. f., http://www.franciscanos.org/enciclopedia/penciclopedia_a.htm.

¹⁸¹ In 1672, Balthasar Bosch de Centellas began to profess in the Order of the Ministers of the Sick. In 1703, he was named Provincial of the Order in Spain. Martínez Gil, «Del modelo medieval a la Contrarreforma: La clericalización de la muerte», 224.

It is a very useful and necessary work for parish priests and confessors, and for all kinds of people, who not only want to live so that others may live and die well, but also to prepare themselves for a happy transition, living to achieve eternal happiness.¹⁸²

In general, the good death defined in these *Ars Moriendi* was the one that occurred gradually, from old age or illness. Sudden death, like murders and accidents, were considered a “bad death” because they did not have any kind of foresight. In contrast, the slow onset of death allowed the dying and their loved ones to perform all relevant religious offices, such as making a will and receiving the sacraments.

In this sense, a good Christian death was characterized by agony on the deathbed. Agony had to be patiently endured, trying to use this time to pay off all economic and spiritual debts before death. These sufferings were not considered unjust: instead, they were to be accepted with humility, for the pains caused by any terminal illness were not comparable to those suffered by Jesus Christ at the moment of his crucifixion.¹⁸³ Moreover, religious doctrine encouraged finding positive aspects in deathly calamity: the dying person had to suffer their ills before dying so that they would never suffer again after death. The following passage in Balthasar Bosch's treatise showcases these dynamics:

Do not lose heart, nor faint, however long and painful your illness may be, nor grieve, however many are the pains and sorrows you now suffer; rather, you should be very encouraged, and desire to suffer more, seeing that our Lord remembers you, and gives you occasions to deserve much glory; And if your Divine Majesty, by this way, wants to take you out of this valley of tears, and lead you to eternal rest,

¹⁸² Baltasar Bosch de Centelles y Cardona, *Practicas de visitar a los enfermos y ayudar a bien morir*, 4.^a ed. (Madrid: Imprenta de Don Gregorio Hermosilla, 1722). (Contienen piadosos, y saludables avisos, y documentos contra las engañosas astucias de el enemigo común; y muchas Santas Oraciones, Protestas, Soliloquios, y fervorosas jaculatorias de Actos de Contrición, de Fe, Esperanza, y Amor de Dios, para socorrer á los que en sus últimas agonías suelen carecer de todo consuelo.

Es obra muy útil, y necesaria para los Párrocos, y Confesores, y para todo género de personas, que no solo quieren vivir para que otros vivan, y mueran con acierto, sino es también para disponerse á un dichoso transito, viviendo para lograr la felicidad eterna).

¹⁸³ Antonio Arbiol, *Visita de enfermo y ejercicio santa de ayudar á bien morir*, 4.^a ed. (Zaragoza: Pedro Carreras, 1729), 210.

you should not be saddened, but rejoice, because your exile is ending, and your happiness begins, which will last forever.¹⁸⁴

Beyond the expected attitudes around death, the physical context of dying was also regulated by *Ars Moriendi*. The deathbed had a particularly important role in the Catholic system. Deathbeds are described in both manuals as the most important moment for the faithful, since it determines the fate of the soul, whether it be immediate salvation in heaven, eternal damnation in hell, or purification of the soul in purgatory. On the deathbed, the sick or dying person faced the temptations of the devil "who, by means of deceitful maxims and trickery, tries to induce the poor sick person to a defection and distrust of the Divine mercy".¹⁸⁵ According to Arbiol, the temptations of the devil had different manifestations, depending on the passions, bad habits and vices of each individual. However, he considered that the most common and omnipresent temptation on the deathbed was to convince the sick that they would not die, which prevented them from accepting death, making a will and receiving the sacred sacraments of confession, viaticum and extreme unction.¹⁸⁶

Another characteristic of the good death, according to the Bosch and Arbiol manuals, was that the dying person should be accompanied and supported by his family and community. Therefore, the good death should be as public as possible. This included public announcements and deathbed assistance, from family, friends, or neighbors. However, not everyone was invited to accompany the dying person on his or her deathbed: gambling partners, lovers, or illegitimate

¹⁸⁴ Bosch de Centelles y Cardona, *Practicas de visitar a los enfermos y ayudar a bien morir*, 68. (No descaezcas, ni te desmayes por larga, y penosa que sea la enfermedad, ni te aflijas por muchos que sean los dolores, y congojas que ahora padeces; antes bien debes alentarte mucho, y desear padecer mas, viendo que nuestro Señor se acuerda de ti, y te da ocasiones de merecer mucha Gloria; y si tu Divina Majestad, por este camino te quiere sacar de este valle de lagrimas, y llevarte al eterno descanso, no debes entristecerte, sino alegrarte, porque da fin tu destierro, y empieza tu felicidad, que a de durar para siempre).

¹⁸⁵ Bosch de Centelles y Cardona, 75. (el qual con fus engañosas máximas, y marañas, pretende inducir al pobre enfermo á vna defesperacion y defconfianca de la mifericordia Divina).

¹⁸⁶ Arbiol, *Visita de enfermo y ejercicio santa de ayudar á bien morir*, 97.

children were often designated as nuisances and possible disturbances to the peace of the sick person.¹⁸⁷

The interest of the manuals of the good death in informing how to ensure a good death implied that living and dying as a good Christian as equally important. Therefore, a good death could help save the soul of a sinful person, and likewise, a bad death could condemn the soul of a person who had lived righteously all their life.

The representation of St. Joseph's deathbed

Both *Ars Moriendi* which circulated in Venezuela in the eighteenth century, mention the importance of requesting and obtaining the intercession of the Virgin Mary and certain saints to guarantee the salvation of the dying person's soul. Likewise, both manuals recommend the intercession of St. Joseph on the deathbed. Asking for the intervention of the Virgin Mary or St. Joseph at this moment helped to accept the nearness of death and to eliminate the fears of dying. In the case of Arbiol's text, he recommends that the following should be explicitly mentioned in the testament:

I wish, and I highly desire, that my last will be protected by the Glorious Virgin Mary, my Lady, Advocate of sinners, the Glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, and my main Advocate Saints, and devotees N. N. to whom I pray to favor me at the hour of my death, so that the Lord Chief Chrif may deign to receive my soul and my spirit in peace.¹⁸⁸

Similarly, Bosch explains in his manual the attributes of St. Joseph to help have a slow death and, therefore, a good death.

¹⁸⁷ Bosch de Centelles y Cardona, *Practicas de visitar a los enfermos y ayudar a bien morir*, 34-35.

¹⁸⁸ Arbiol, *Visita de enfermo y ejercicio santa de ayudar á bien morir*, 211. (Item, quiero, y defeo Almamente, que de esta mi ultima voluntad fea Executora, y Protectora la Gloriosa fiempre Virgen María, mi Señora, Abogada de los pecadores, el Glorioso Patriarca San Jofeph , y mis principales Santos Advogados , y devotos N. N. a los quales ruego me favorezcan en la hora de mi muerte , para que fe digne Nuefiro Señor Jefu-Chrifto recibir en paz mi alma, y mi efpiritu).

O most glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, most worthy effigy of the ever-virgin Mary, for your mercy, and your merciful faith protect an afflicted sinner in the trance of his death. I beg you, my most faithful Advocate, and my Lord St. Joseph, for the consolation that you have had in your death with the grace of our Lord Christ and his Most Holy Mother, that you affirm me in my death, and that you give me the grace to die slowly.¹⁸⁹

The idea of St. Joseph as a guarantor of a good death was widespread in the early modern period, as it was one of the seven privileges that characterized the saint. Juan Antonio Navarrete mentions these seven privileges in his encyclopedia *Arcas de Letras y Teatro Universal* (Ark of Letters and Universal Theater), written in the province of Venezuela at the end of the eighteenth century. He took this information from the extended text, *Mystical City of God* (Mística Ciudad de Dios), written by the Spanish nun, María de Jesús de Ágreda (1670).

Seven privileges have been granted to him by the Most High through his great Holiness and as his putative Father, for those who worthily invoke him as their Patron and Protector. The first is that through his intercession they may attain the virtue of chastity and overcome the dangers and precipices of carnal concupiscence and brutal sensuality. The 2nd, is powerful help to come out of sin and return to the friendship of our God. The third, is grace and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, his most chaste spouse. The 4th, is a good death and strength to overcome the power of the Demons at that last hour. The 5th, that his admirable name be feared by the Demons themselves at the mere mention of it. The 6th, is to obtain also bodily health and remedy in other works. The 7th, and last, is the succession of children in the families.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Bosch de Centelles y Cardona, *Prácticas de visitar a los enfermos y ayudar a bien morir*, 375. (O Gloriosísimo Patriarca San Jofeph, Efpfo dignusimo de la fiempre Virgen Maria, de vuestra piedad, y misericordia fe ampara vn pecador afligido en el trance de fu muerte. Yo os ruego, ó fidelísimo Abogado, y Señor mió San Jofeph, por el confuelo que tuvifteis en vuestra muerte con la affluencia de Chrifto Señor nueftro y de fu Santísima Madre, que me afsiftais en mia , y me alcancéis gracia para morir lentamente).

¹⁹⁰ Juan Antonio Navarrete, *Arca de letras y teatro universal*, ed. Blas Bruni Celli (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1993), 366. (Siete privilegios le tiene concedido el Altísimo por su gran Santidad y como a Padre suyo putativo, para los que dignamente le invocaren como Patrón y Protector suyo. El 1º, es que por su intercesión alcancen la virtud de la castidad y puedan vencer los peligros y precipicios de la concupiscencia carnal y sensualidad brutal. El 2º, auxilios poderosos para salir del pecado y volver a la amistad de nuestro Dios. El 3º, la gracia y devoción con la Santísima Virgen María, su castísima esposa. El 4º, una buena muerte Y fortaleza para vencer en aquella última hora el poder de los Demonios. El 5º, que su admirable nombre sea temido de los mismos Demonios al sólo oír nombrarlo. El 6º, el conseguir también la salud corporal Y el remedio en otros trabajos. El 7º, y último, la sucesión de hijos en las familias).

Despite the widespread acceptance of St. Joseph's deathbed intercession, this idea was not supported by any biblical narrative. Instead, the characteristics of St. Joseph's terminal illness and death, which served as a model later on, were constructed through hagiographies, sermons, and other apocryphal texts.¹⁹¹ The primary source of Joseph's agony was the apocryphal text *The History of Joseph the Carpenter*,¹⁹² which tells the story of how Jesus Christ explains Joseph's death to His apostles. The narrative describes in detail all the stages of Joseph's death, from the illness that afflicted him in his old age and his agony in bed to the mourning of Mary and Jesus after his death. This text spread in Europe thanks to a Latin version published by Isidoro Isolani in 1522 in his text *Summa de donis sancti Joseph*. The Dominican did not publish the text in its entirety but removed the passages he considered contrary to Christian orthodoxy, resulting in a shorter and less dramatic version.¹⁹³ This simplified version was the one that became known in the Hispanic world in the seventeenth century thanks to the work of Jerónimo Gracián. In the chapter dedicated to the death of Saint Joseph, Gracián gives an extensive textual quotation of the passage he translated into Spanish. The narrative follows the structure of the apocryphal text, with Jesus as the first-person narrator. According to the text reproduced by Gracián, when Joseph falls ill, Jesus says to him:

'God save you, Joseph, My father. Why are you troubled, for you are a blessed and holy man?' When he heard My voice, he responded: 'Oh, my Son, the pains and fear of death surround me, but at the moment that I heard Your voice my soul was at peace because You are Jesus, the Savior and the Redeemer of my soul, You are the veil that covers my sins, Your name on my lips is most sweet. Jesus, You are the power of my eyes; You are the ear that hears everything that is in the world. Hear me, Your servant, today. I entreat You to look at and to receive the tears that I shed in Your presence because I believe that You are my true God and Lord, as the angel told me many times. Do not impute sin to me because I thought to abandon Your

¹⁹¹ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 135.

¹⁹² Two versions of this text are preserved, a Coptic codex from the tenth or eleventh century and an Arabic codex from the fourteenth century, both from Egypt, and it is suspected that older versions of the text may exist. Annarosa Dordoni, «In illa hora tremenda. La devozione a san Giuseppe patrono della buona morte nei secoli XVI-XX (prima parte)», *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 3 (1998): 280; Ehrman y Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 158.

¹⁹³ Dordoni, «In illa hora tremenda. La devozione a san Giuseppe patrono della buona morte nei secoli XVI-XX (prima parte)», 282.

holy and pure virgin mother the first time that I saw her pregnant. Not knowing what I should do, the angel of the Lord revealed to me Your wondrous mystery, directed and ordered that I give You the name Jesus, and told me that You are He who will save His people from their sins, that You are the true God and the true Son of God.' Having said these things, his illness overcame him, and he was no longer able to speak.¹⁹⁴

This passage shows that anyone can be afraid of death, even someone as virtuous as St. Joseph. The important thing is that, despite this fear, the faithful entrust themselves to God in order to guarantee the salvation of their souls. The text quoted and translated by Gracián continues with a description of Joseph's deathbed and the assistance given to him by his son Jesus and his wife Mary.

Then I sat at the head of Joseph's bed, and My mother was at the foot. The old man turned his face toward Me, and with great sighs, he was looking at Me. I leaned over him, and touched his feet, and held his hand between My hands for over an hour. Joseph indicated, as best he could, that I should not leave him; his eyes were fixed on Me. Two angels, St. Michael, and St. Gabriel, came for My father Joseph, and, thus, with great patience and joy, he died. With My own hand, I closed his eyes and mouth, and I composed his face. Hearing about Joseph's death, the whole town gathered. His closest relatives washed his body and anointed it with fragrant perfume. Meanwhile, I prayed to My Father, and, when I finished praying, a multitude of angels came. I commanded two of them to dress the body, and they dressed the body of the blessed old man Joseph in a white robe. I blessed Joseph's body so that it would not decompose, and I also said: 'I will bless and favor any person in the assembly of the just, who, on the day of your memorial, Joseph, offers sacrifice to God and meditates on your life, travails, and passage from this world.'¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Gracián, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ*, 225-26; Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 187 reverse. (Dios te salve mi padre Joseph, porque te turbas assi siendo hombre bendito y santo. El qual como oyo mi voz respondio: O hijo mio, los dolores, y temor de la muerte me rodean, mas al punto que oy tu voz mi alma se consolo, porque tu eres Jesus, salvador, y librador de mi alma: tu eres la cortina que cubre mis pecados, tu nombre en mi boca es dulcissimo: Jesus tu eres virtud de mis ojos, tu eres el oydo que oye todo quanto ay en el mundo, oyeme el dia de oy a mi tu siervo, y suplicote que mires y recibas las lagrimas que derramo en tu presencia, porque yo creo que eres tu verdadero Dios y Señor mio, como me lo dixo el angel muchas vezes: y no me imputes que tuve pensamiento de dexar tu santa y pura madre Virgen, la primera vez que la vi preñada, que no sabia lo que me hazer, y el angel del señor me enseñó tu maravilloso mysterio, y me guio, y mando que te pusiesse nombre Jesus, y me dixo que tu eres el que ha de salvar su pueblo de sus pecados: tu eres verdadero Dios, y verdadero Dios, y verdadero hijo de Dios. Y dicha estas palabras agavosele la enfermedad, y quitosele la habla).

¹⁹⁵ Gracián, *Just Man, Husband of Mary, Guardian of Christ*, 226-27; Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 189. (Entonces yo me sente a la cabeza de Joseph, y mi madre a los pies, y el viejo bolvio su rostro a mi, y con grandes suspiros me estava mirando: yo me incline y le toque los pies, y tenia su mano entre las mias por una larga hora, y Joseph hazia señales como mejor podia, que no le dexasse,

This particular narrative is the one that most influenced the iconographic model of the death of St. Joseph developed in Latin America at the end of the seventeenth century. In general, this model shows St. Joseph in his bed, accompanied by Jesus, who prays and gives words of encouragement. Also present in the room are the Virgin Mary and several angels, among whom it is common to see St. Michael. Another important characteristic of the iconography of the Transit of St. Joseph is the age at which the saint is depicted. The painting manuals recommended that St. Joseph should be represented as old as he was at the moment of his death. In particular, the painting manual written in Latin by Juan Interian de Ayala, entitled *The Christian and erudite painter* (El pintor christiano y erudito), and translated into Spanish in 1782, stated that St. Joseph should be painted on his deathbed at "about seventy years, or something more, it is very reasonable that on this occasion he is painted old, because, in addition to age, his strength was broken by the many works he had suffered."¹⁹⁶

Just as there was an interest in knowing the age of St. Joseph when he married Mary, there were also several discussions about the age at which St. Joseph died. The reason for this interest was to justify why Joseph was not present at the Passion of Christ. There was some consensus that St. Joseph had died before Jesus began his public life, which explains why he was not present at the wedding in Cana.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, many theologians rejected the idea that St. Joseph died at the astonishing age of 111, as expressed in the apocryphal text recounting his death. Instead,

teniendo los ojos enclavados en mí. Vinieron dos Angeles, San Miguel y San Gabriel a mi padre Joseph, y assi con gran paciencia y alegría espiro. Y yo con mi propia mano cerre sus ojos, y su boca, y conpuse su rostro. Y toda la ciudad oyendo la muerte de Joseph se ayunto, y los mas familiares suyos lavaron su cuerpo, y le ungieron con ungientos olorosos, y entretanto hize yo oracion vino multitud de Angeles, y mande a dos de ellos que vistiessen el cuerpo, y ellos vistieron con una vestidura blanca el cuerpo del viejo bendito Joseph: y yo bendixe su cuerpo para que no se podreciesse, y dixee tambien: Yo bendecire y favorecere aquel hombre de la Yglesia de los justos, que en el dia de tu memoria (Joseph) ofreciere sacrificio a dios, y que meditare tu vida, y tus trabajos, y transito deste mundo).

¹⁹⁶ Juan Interian de Ayala, *El pintor Christiano, y erudito, ó tratado de los errores que suelen cometerse frecuentemente en pintar, y esculpir las Imágenes Sagradas*, trad. Luis de Durán y de Bastéro, D. Joachin Ibarra (Madrid, 1782), 146. (unos setenta años, ó algo mas, es muy puesto en razon, que en esta ocasion se le pinte viejo, pues ademas de la edad, tenia quebrantadas las fuerzas por los muchos trabajos, que habia padecido).

¹⁹⁷ Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, monarquía y poder*, 24.

several Hispanic theologians accepted that Joseph fell ill and died at the age of seventy or so.¹⁹⁸ Jerónimo Gracián was one of them, as shown in his declaration that “Joseph was betrothed when he was forty years old and died when he was sixty-nine, and for almost thirty years he enjoyed the sweet company of Mary and Jesus.”¹⁹⁹ For this reason, St. Joseph is most often depicted as senile, gray-haired, and pained on his deathbed to represent his advanced age. However, there are examples of American paintings that show a young Joseph with brown hair and beard and a serene expression. Moreover, in this youthful version, St. Joseph may bear a strong resemblance to Jesus Christ, perhaps to emphasize the father-son relationship between the two. Below are two iconographic examples, a Spanish painting with a senile Joseph (Figure 15) and a Mexican painting with a youthful Joseph (Figure 16), both from the eighteenth century.

¹⁹⁸ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 137.

¹⁹⁹ Gracián, *Sumario de las excelencias del glorioso San Joseph esposo de la Virgen Maria*, 29. (Joseph se desposó siendo de quarenta años, y murió de sesenta y nueve, y casi treynta años gozó de la dulce compañía de Maria, y Jesus).



Figure 15 - Francisco Goya, *Sketch of The transit of St. Joseph*, 1787. (Site: https://es.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archivo:El_tr%C3%A1nsito_de_San_Jos%C3%A9_%28boceto%29_por_Francisco_de_Goya.jpg)



Figure 16 - Anonymous, *Angony of Saint Francis Xavier and death of Saint Joseph*, 1759. (Jorge Luis Merlo Solorio. "Tránsito de San José: Una Iconografía Divergente." Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2013)

According to the historian Jorge Luis Merlo Solorio, the version of Saint Joseph as a young and serene man on his deathbed was a Latin American peculiarity. This construction, contrary to the treatises on painting and the descriptions in devotional books, can be explained by the greatness attributed to Saint Joseph on the American continent, especially in New Spain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The glorification of the saint consisted in expressing that "St. Joseph does not lose his integrity, even in those moments when a diminished state would be logical, due to aging and the pains of agony."²⁰⁰ This integrity and serenity on his deathbed may have expressed to the faithful that St. Joseph had nothing to fear or suffer at the hour of his death because he had lived a virtuous life and was accompanied by his son Jesus Christ and his wife, the Virgin Mary. This image of a young and calm St. Joseph on his deathbed was also present in late colonial Venezuela, as will be shown in the following section.

Representations of St. Joseph's death in late colonial Venezuela

There are two examples of paintings of the death of Saint Joseph, painted by Juan Pedro López at the end of the eighteenth century in the province of Venezuela (Figures 17 and 18). These two paintings are the only ones available in catalogs of Venezuelan colonial painting, and although they are only two examples, they can help us approach how the deathbed of St. Joseph was represented in the Venezuelan colonial context, which was in line with the Latin American pictorial tradition of the time, as we will see below.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Jorge Luis Merlo Solorio, «Tránsito de San José: una iconografía divergente», en *Studia. Od sztuki naskalnej do współczesnych murali = Estudios. Desde el arte rupestre hasta los murales contemporáneos*, ed. Anna Wendorff (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2013), 98. (San José no pierde entereza, incluso en aquellos momentos donde resultaría lógica una condición aminorada a causa del envejecimiento y los achaques de la agonía).

²⁰¹ The vast majority of Venezuelan colonial paintings that have survived to the present day belong to private collections and are medium-sized paintings, so it can be said that they were consumed in the private sphere. Unfortunately, the colonial paintings exhibited in ecclesiastical institutions in Venezuela did not suffer the same fate, as they were exposed to environmental corrosion and the malpractice of their caretakers. The reasons for the lack of other examples of the Death of Saint Joseph can be explained in this context, since this type of painting was only present in religious institutions, such as churches, convents, seminaries, so that their number was already reduced during the time of their creation and their care was deficient. This does not mean, however, that the

Both paintings have a very similar composition, with the main difference being the level of detail of each one and the presence of a court of angels in the upper part of the painting (Figure 17). In both paintings, a middle-aged Joseph on his deathbed is at the center. At the foot of the bed is the Virgin Mary, patiently accompanying her husband, and next to her is Jesus, pointing upward as if leading his earthly father to heaven. On the other side of the bed is St. Michael in full armor, trampling a demon under his feet. This dichotomy between the angelic court at the top and the defeated demon at the bottom can be interpreted as meaning that a good death, mediated by Jesus, Mary and St. Michael, can guarantee the salvation of the soul. In other words, only with the intervention of the Church can the evil that haunts the dying and the recently deceased be defeated.



Figure 17 - Juan Pedro López, The transit of Saint Joseph, 1772, Seminary of Santa Rosa de Lima, Caracas. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)



Figure 18 - Juan Pedro López, Story of the life of the Virgin Mary III: the adoration of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, Christ among the Doctors, the transit of St. Joseph, 1752, Saint Francis Church, Caracas. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)



colonial faithful were not familiar with the image of Saint Joseph's death, since its display in churches guaranteed that it would be seen.

The more detailed image of the death of San José (Figure 17) displays an inscription at the bottom: “The Most Illustrious Doctor Don Mariano Marti, worthy Bishop of this Diocese: grants 40 days of indulgences to each of these images: Jesus, with a Creed. Our Lady with a Hail Mary and Lord St. Joseph, with an Our Father and Hail Mary.”²⁰² This indulgence offered the believers a certain number of days out of Purgatory in exchange for praying in front of this picture. Likewise, this indulgence engraved on the surface of the painting is a further demonstration of the role that the Church attributed to St. Joseph as patron of the good death.

As with all images of Saint Joseph, the composition of his death scene is based on images from the life of the Virgin Mary. The model of the Dormition or Death of the Virgin comes from apocryphal sources that tell of her death and later Assumption. In the thirteenth century, these accounts were commented on by Jacobus de Voragine in *The Golden Legend*. This text in particular was used as one of the most important references for the construction of the iconography of the Dormition of the Virgin, especially the fact that she died in bed accompanied by all the apostles.²⁰³ For this reason, the two key elements of this type of representation are the Virgin lying peacefully on her bed and the apostles surrounding the scene.²⁰⁴ These two elements can be seen in the following Venezuelan examples (Figures 19 and 20).

²⁰² El Ilustrísimo Señor Doctor Don Mariano Martí dignísimo Obispo de esta Diócesis: concede 40 dias de indulgencias a cada una de estas ymágenes: Jesus, con un Credo. Nuestra Señora con un Ave María y Señor San Josef, con un Padre Nuestro y Ave María.

²⁰³ Duclow, «Dying Well: The Ars moriendi and the Dormition of the Virgin», 389.

²⁰⁴ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*, 138.



Figure 19 - Anonymous, the dormition of the Virgin, Second half of the 18th century, Caracas. (Carlos Duarte. *Pintura e Iconografía Popular de Venezuela*. Caracas: Ernesto Armitano Editor, 1978)



Figure 20 - Juan Pedro López, Story of the life of the Virgin Mary VI: the Dormition of the Virgen, 1752, Saint Francis Church, Caracas. (Carlos Duarte, Juan Pedro López: *Maestro de Pintor, Escultor y Dorador, 1724-1787*. Caracas: Galería de Arte Nacional, 1996)

The death of St. Joseph and the Dormition of the Virgin have in common that their deaths were not solitary but accompanied. For Mary, the apostles are at her side on her way to heaven, while Joseph is accompanied by his wife and son, who comforts him. It is this company that makes the death of Mary and Joseph a "good death". Valdivielso, in his long poem on Joseph, emphasizes the importance of this companionship as follows

From this strong Joseph lived one day
patiently suffering the evils,
Joyful enters the beautiful company
Of the son, and Mother who are serving him:
Christ watches over him, Mary serves him,
The one, and the other his pain feeling,
The one, and the other in tears bathed
Of seeing their beloved Joseph die.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Valdivieso, *Vida, excelencia y muerte del glorioso patriarca y esposo de nuestra Señora San José*, 283.
(Desta fuerte Joseph vivió algun día

The Joseph depicted in the two Venezuelan paintings (Figures 17 and 18) is the youthful version of the saint, whose appearance is similar to that of his son. This version of a middle-aged and dying St. Joseph can have several interpretations by the public that observes these artworks. One of them could have been to glorify the figure of St. Joseph, who neither fears nor suffers on his deathbed, because he has lived a virtuous life and, thanks to the presence of Mary and Jesus, is guaranteed a good death. Another function was to leave no doubt that Joseph was the earthly father of Jesus, emphasized by the resemblance and youthfulness of the two at the deathbed. A final interpretation of the audience could have been that, seeing a young Joseph dying, they reflected that not only older people can reach the moment of their death, but also that it can happen to anyone at any stage of life.

The two Venezuelan paintings of the Transit of St. Joseph were exhibited in ecclesiastical institutions in Caracas, one in the Seminary of Santa Rosa de Lima and the other in the Church of San Francisco. Likewise, bishop Mariano Martí recorded that the altars dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory in some churches of the province were accompanied by figures and paintings representing St. Joseph. In the Cathedral of Caracas, the altar of Holy Souls consisted of "a large painting of the Blessed Souls, in the center of it, a niche, and in it, a full-body carved image of the effigy of the Lord Saint Joseph"²⁰⁶ Another very illustrative example of the altars of the Holy Souls was the one in the hospital of San Lazaro, where indulgences were granted for praying in front of it, as Bishop Martí mentions in his inventories:

con paciencia los males padeciendo,
Alegre entra la hermosa compañía
Del hijo, y Madre que le estan sirviendo:
Christo le vela, sirvele Maria,
El uno, y otro su dolor sintiendo,
El uno, y otro en lagrimas bañado
De ver morir a su Joseph amado).

²⁰⁶ Martí, *Obispo Mariano Martí*, Tome III, 6. (un cuadro grande de las Animas Benditas, en medio de él, un nicho, y dentro de él una imagen de talla de cuerpo entero de la efigie del Señor San José).

This altar has a niche and inside it, the image of Lord Saint Joseph, of full body, of carving with his Child in the hands, and above the niche the picture of the Souls as of more than two rods, His Illustrious Lord granted 40 days of Indulgence every time that they recite an Our Father to Lord Saint Joseph and the Holy Souls. Next to the Epistle in the holy water basin, there is a drawer with its lock to collect alms, His Illustrious Lord granted 40 days to the one who gives some alms.²⁰⁷

Although the sculpture did not depict St. Joseph's death, himself holding the infant Jesus, its presence on the altar of the Holy Souls and the indulgences offered to demonstrate the direct relationship between St. Joseph and the good death attributed to him by the Catholic Church in Venezuela and Latin America. Therefore, it can be said that the veneration of St. Joseph as the patron of the good death in the province of Venezuela could have been carried out in public spaces to encourage reflection on death and, at the same time, the payment of donations to the church dedicated to the Holy Souls of Purgatory.

As such, praying and asking for the intercession of St. Joseph on one's deathbed could guarantee the salvation of the soul in the struggle against temptation during the transit. For this reason, the images of St. Joseph's death sought to convey to the faithful that Joseph died as a good Christian because he died free from sin and in the company of his family: Christ and the Virgin.

²⁰⁷ Martí, Tome III, 147. (Este altar tiene un nicho y dentro de él la imagen de Señor San José, de cuerpo entero, de talla con su Niño en las manos, y arriba del nicho el cuadro de Animas como de más de dos varas, Su Señor Ilustrísimo concedió 40 días de Indulgencia cada vez que rezaren un Padre Nuestro a Señor San José y a las Benditas Animas. Al lado de la Epístola en la pila de agua bendita se halla un cajón con su cerradura para recoger limosna, Su Señor Ilustrísimo concedió 40 días al que diere alguna limosna).

Conclusion

The construction of the figures of the saints and the Virgin Mary was officially made by the Catholic Church to provide models with which the faithful could identify according to their status, role, and situation.²⁰⁸ This included, of course, the Holy Family and its members as models to be followed by every Christian household. In the early modern period, the figure of St. Joseph was pushed to be an example for parents, husbands and workers, as well as for the dying and the sick on their deathbeds.²⁰⁹ This made him a multifaceted and multipurpose saint, adapted to the needs of the faithful: depending on the situation, one aspect was more privileged than the others. All these patronages and functions were interrelated since it was expected that a good father would also be a good worker and husband, and vice versa, which also guaranteed a good and happy death, accompanied by his family.²¹⁰

Following St. Joseph's example and Church dogma, men were expected to increase their involvement as fathers-leaders within the nuclear family. Since Joseph was positioned at a similar level to the Virgin Mary as the protector, provider, and guide of the child Jesus, fathers were to be as present as mothers within the nuclear family. In this sense, they were expected to participate not only as economic benefactors but also as affectionate tutors of the new generations.

Simultaneously to his construction as the father figure in the Holy Family, St. Joseph was an example of how to live and die in a properly Christian way and, thanks to this, gain access to

²⁰⁸ Peter Burke, "How to Become a Counter-Reformation Saint," in *The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. David Martin Luebke, Blackwell Essential Readings in History (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1999), 140.

²⁰⁹ Irma Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, Monarquía y Poder: El Glorioso Patriarca Señor San Joseph En El Perú Virreinal*, 1. ed, Publicaciones Del Instituto Riva-Agüero 267 (Lima, Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Instituto Riva-Agüero, 2010), 14.

²¹⁰ In the present study, I have presented and analyzed only the facet of Saint Joseph as an example of paternity and good death in the province of Venezuela at the end of the colonial period, since it was considered that both aspects were closely related and also most of the iconographic and textual sources dealt with both aspects.

eternal glory in heaven. Having a good Christian death with the last sacraments and a written testament before dying was as important as having a good Christian life without committing mortal sins. The importance of the company in the last moments of life is another crucial aspect of the example of a good death given by St. Joseph. This companionship should preferably come from the members of the nuclear family, as well as the closest friends of the sick or dying person.

Therefore, the representation of the Holy Family and the prominence of St. Joseph in images and literature was an instrument of the Christianization of the life cycle, the private life and the family organization in Western cultural thought. The treatment of St. Joseph in the early-modern province of Venezuela is a great example of this situation.

On the one hand, the representation of St. Joseph became the ideal model of paternal love in the Christian nuclear family. As such, the loving behavior between Joseph and Jesus was expected to be followed by Christian fathers and their children. This included the paternal task of educating his offspring so that the new generation would follow God's law, as well as the obedience and respect that children should have for their parents. This is exemplified by the norms and duties of fathers and descendants expressed in the *Sinodal Constitutions of Caracas*. The constitutions are a clear example of the reach of the father's new role within the modern family, modeled after the figure of Joseph. On the other hand, at the same time, the representation of St. Joseph became the ideal model of a good death in the province of Venezuela and the rest of the Spanish colonies. Following Joseph's example was more than ideal for ensuring a good death. This required, rather than fearing death, accepting it and preparing for its arrival. If the faithful Christian lived virtuously and died absolved and in the company of their family and community, the act of dying was transformed from something fearful into an act full of happiness and acceptance.

It is interesting to note that in both representations of St. Joseph, the paternity model and the good death model, he is presented in his youthful version. In the images used in colonial times, St. Joseph bears a striking resemblance to the adult Jesus Christ's physical appearance (Figures 4, 8, 11, 17). We can venture to say that this physical resemblance between the adoptive father and adopted son could have had several functions, such as visually communicating to the viewers the closeness between St. Joseph and Jesus Christ, even though they were not related by blood. It could also have served to reinforce the idea that St. Joseph was the father figure of Jesus during his earthly life, and therefore the one who raised and protected him, as any father should do. This physical resemblance between Jesus and Joseph in colonial paintings should be explored further in future research by increasing the geographical scale and the number of pictorial examples.

The iconographic and textual representations of St. Joseph were presented to the communities of the faithful in eighteenth-century Venezuela following the patterns and precepts of the Hispanic Catholic Church at that time. In other words, it can be said that the images of St. Joseph in Venezuela follow the orthodoxy established by the Church and the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, without transgressing any rule.²¹¹ The manuals addressed to painters, such as *The Christian and erudite painter* (El pintor christiano y erudito), required that Saint Joseph be painted as a middle-aged man, not infirm or very old, with sufficient strength to cope with the demands of the flight to Egypt and the carpentry work to provide shelter and food for his wife and son. In addition, he was expected to have a modest appearance and clothing. It was also important that he be depicted next to the Child Jesus, showing paternal love, and with his flowered staff, symbolizing purity and virginity. All these elements are present in the Venezuelan paintings presented previously, without any modification or

²¹¹ On censorship of religious images imposed by the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in colonial Venezuela, see Janeth Rodríguez Nóbrega, *Las imágenes expurgadas: censura del arte religioso en el período colonial* (León: Univ. de León, Secretariado de Publicaciones, 2008).

transgression of the norms.²¹² However, this does not exclude the possibility that future research, including work in the local archdiocesan archives, may reveal unique or novel elements in the representation of the figure of St. Joseph in the province of Venezuela.

Therefore, it can be said that, in the eighteenth century, the presentation and use of the figure of St. Joseph by the Church as a model of fatherhood and good death for the faithful of the province of Venezuela follows the same patterns as those revealed by Charlene Black Villaseñor for the case of Mexico,²¹³ Irma Barriga Calle for the case of Peru,²¹⁴ and Carolyn C. Wilson for the case of Bolivia.²¹⁵ The great difference between the case of Venezuela and that of the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru was the production of religious texts dedicated to St. Joseph. In Venezuela, all of the devotional books on St. Joseph that circulated in the province were written and published in Spain.²¹⁶ In the viceregal centers, on the other hand, there was a local production of sermons and religious treatises dedicated to St. Joseph. This may have greatly influenced the expressions of the cult of St. Joseph in colonial Venezuela, which followed the pictorial and devotional parameters produced in the metropolis and the viceregal centers of power in the overseas colonies.

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined how the paintings and devotional text of St. Joseph could have functioned to support and promote an ideal model of fatherhood and good death in the colonial period in the Americas. In other words, the paintings and devotional texts of St. Joseph that circulated in the Spanish Empire, including the province of Venezuela, likely expressed the Church's expectation of greater active participation and responsibility of men

²¹² Juan Interian de Ayala, *El Pintor Christiano, y Erudito, ó Tratado de Los Errores Que Sueln Cometerse Freqüentemente En Pintar, y Esculpir Las Imágenes Sagradas*, trans. Luis de Durán y de Bastéro, D. Joachin Ibarra (Madrid, 1782), 139–49.

²¹³ Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph*.

²¹⁴ Barriga Calle, *Patrocinio, monarquía y poder*.

²¹⁵ Wilson, «The Image of Saint Joseph in a Selection of Colonial Paintings in Bolivian Collections».

²¹⁶ This can be explained by the lack of a printing press in Venezuela throughout the colonial period.

within the household, and at the same time, avoid as much as possible death without religious preparations and isolated from the community.

However, it is important to point out that the pictorial and textual representations of St. Joseph represent ideal models and not reality. The need to present these guidelines may also express the existence of fathers and dying persons who did not follow these ideal models. Consequently, the Church expected every believer to behave like St. Joseph within the household and in the last moments of life on the deathbed, even if the reality was probably far from that.

In this sense, previous studies have found that a paternal figure was not present in every household in colonial Venezuela.²¹⁷ In the same way, some fathers were not always the best tutors or role models for the next generation, either because of their lack of commitment or because they abused their authority.²¹⁸ In the case of good death, at certain times it was not always possible to guarantee a slow death on one's deathbed since anyone could die by accident or murder. For these reasons, it was more than advisable to make a will before taking any dangerous action, such as traveling long distances.²¹⁹

In addition, devotional books and manuals on the good death were present in Venezuelan colonial libraries, but this does not mean that their use and reading were widespread. We must take into account the high rate of illiteracy and the fact that only a minority of wealthy people had a library, and it should also be noted that not all of these libraries had books related to

²¹⁷ Juan Alméjia's research indicates that the families headed by women were not the most common in Venezuela in the second half of the eighteenth century, with 20.7% of the households studied being headed by single women, widows or with the husband not present. Juan Alméjia Bermúdez, *La Familia En La Provincia de Venezuela, 1745-1798*, Colecciones MAPFRE 1492 14 (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, 1992), 223.

²¹⁸ For more information on the abuse of power by heads of household in colonial Venezuela see Alexander Zambrano "Las Cenizas del amor: Matrimonio, divorcio y malos tratos a las mujeres casadas en la Provincia de Caracas (siglo XVIII)," Jorge Flores González y Neller Ochoa (Comp.), *Se acata pero no se cumple, historia y sociedad en la provincia de Caracas (siglo XVIII)* (Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia, 2014), and Ermila Troconis de Veracochea, *Documentos para el estudio de los esclavos negros en Venezuela: selección y estudio preliminar* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1987).

²¹⁹ Arbiol, *Visita de enfermo y ejercicio santa de ayudar á bien morir*, 41.

reflection and learning about the good death. Thus, the knowledge and information contained in the devotional books on St. Joseph and the *Ars moriendi* were primarily spread through the reinterpretation of the clergy and their oral transmission during Masses, confessions and pastoral preaching.

For these reasons, it is difficult to determine the extension and effectiveness of these exemplary models in religious images and texts. It can be argued that they were the main way of communicating these models or simply a reminder of how the life and death of any good Christian believer should be. Overall, what is most certain about these exemplary models is the intention that the Church had in creating and disseminating them in the early modern period: To showcase St. Joseph's role as protector, guide and provider of the Holy Family as an example of good fatherhood, and Joseph's deathbed as the ideal of a good Christian death.

Before concluding, it is necessary to mention the limitations of this dissertation and the future steps that can be taken to expand this research. By using only religious paintings and devotional books about St. Joseph, this study could only focus on how the figure of the saint was presented in the province of Venezuela during the eighteenth century. Therefore, with this type of source, it is not possible to determine the level of acceptance and effectiveness of the figure of St. Joseph presented to the faithful. This information could be reconstructed with ethnographic sources, liturgical texts and/or denunciations of transgressions of the norm received by the tribunal of the Inquisition. In order to find this type of historical documents, a search should be made in the local archives of ecclesiastical institutions in Venezuela outside the capital, Caracas. In the same way, this could allow a broader study of the figure of St. Joseph, not only as a model of paternity and good death, but also as a husband and worker/craftsman, which could shed light on the local expressions of the cult of St. Joseph in the territory of the province of Venezuela.

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