

Homily

The Feast of the Holy Family Jesus, Mary & Joseph

December 26, 2021

Show of hands, how many here are moms? How many are dads? How many have parents? Great! So, everyone can relate to the idea of family. Big or small, tightknit or expanded, good relationships or not so much, we all can connect with and share stories of family.

Many years ago, when my sons were still single digits in age, I remember telling them that I was old. My younger son, Morgan, quickly countered, "Oh, no, Dad; you're not old. Grandpa is old." I took no time at all to call my dad and share the wisdom of his young grandson. My dad was not impressed.

Some twenty years later, not too long ago, I relived the story with my two sons, relishing the experience of sharing Morgan's wisdom with my dad. Just as quickly, Morgan quipped, "Oh, no, Dad; you ARE old now." I did share my son's wisdom with my dad, but not with as much enthusiasm this time.

In Sirach, in the first reading, God sets mom and dad in places of honor in the family. Children are instructed to honor, obey and care for their parents. In doing so, children are rewarded in God's justice.

In the Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 84, we see how blessed we are when we dwell in God's house. We see ourselves as members of God's household; we long for the comforts of living together with our Lord.

In Colossians, in the second reading, we are encouraged and instructed to act a certain way with one another, as in how to treat our brothers and sisters. We, "put on love," and, "let peace of Christ control our lives." We, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," and, "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through him."

And then we hear the most contested and conflicted instructions, "Wives, be subordinate to your husbands," and, "husbands, love your wives," and, "children, obey your parents in everything." It sounds like the wives get the short end of the stick. But in reality, we see here the format, the outline of the perfect familial relationship:

Let's look at the Holy Family. St. Joseph, the Chaste Heart, the Terror of Demons, the earthly father of our Lord. He was the leader of the Holy Family. He protected them; he took them to Egypt to evade the murder of his adopted son. He provided for them; as a carpenter, he provided a roof, food and clothing. He led them; on the way to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Joseph held in his arms the God of the Universe and the Queen of Heaven and Earth.

The Virgin Mother, Mother of God, Queen of the Universe, the Immaculate Heart of Mary. She said, “Yes,” to God’s call. She nurtured and provided for her Son, our Lord. She was sinless. and she was obedient, not just to God but to Joseph, to whom she was entrusted. She followed Joseph to Egypt right after giving birth; she followed Joseph to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast.

The Word made Flesh, the Only Begotten Son of God, our Incarnate Lord, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the perfect Son. He was not only the Son of God, but Son of Mary. He was obedient not only to Mary but to Joseph.

We can relate to at least one but probably two or all three of the members of the perfect Holy Family. Yes, we all fall short of what we are called to do and be, but we can look to the Holy Family for guidance and instruction.

We can look to St. Joseph as an example of leadership. St. Joseph loved and protected and guided his family as he was called to do.

We can look to Holy Mary as an example of motherhood, nurturing Jesus, caring for Him, always saying, “Yes,” no matter how much it hurt. We can learn from her suffering as she watched her only Son suffer and die.

We can look to Jesus as an example of sonship – how to be the perfect son or daughter, brother or sister. Jesus is like us in all ways but sin. He loved, He prayed, He suffered and He died, all for us.

As I listened to Luke’s words in today’s Gospel, I am humbled how Jesus fearlessly stayed in Jerusalem to be in His Father’s house. I am amazed at how Jesus sat in the midst of the teachers and how He astonished them with His questions and answers.

And I am humbled by Joseph and Mary’s response to finding Jesus in the temple; it was in their lack of understanding that we can all take a cue and accept the mysteries of our God as a gift to ponder, an opportunity to learn and grow.

I often think I have the answer. In reality, I haven’t a clue. In reality, I have an opportunity to ponder what it is that I am to do and look to the Holy Family for guidance and wisdom.