

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

May God bless all your families in the New Year!

December 27, 2020

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Feast (Yr B)

Gen 15: 1-6, 21:1-3; Hebr. 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Lk 2: 22-40

On the last Sunday of the year, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. We are here to offer all the members of our own families on the altar for God's blessing. This feast reminds us that we are part of a human family and at the same time we belong to God's family, the Church. In both these families, we have privileges and responsibilities to work out our salvation together — as women, men, and children living and working in love and peace.

How? Because family is the resting/nursery ground where values and virtues are inculcated and cultivated, healthy families are essential to the well-being of society. As anyone can attest, however, during the past quarter-century or so, a variety of factors have contributed to the progressive fragmentation, isolation and structural evolution of the family unit. These factors are compounded by what one, Dr. William Bennet has described as a "Cultural Disintegration". He says: "We have ceased being clear about the standards we hold and the principles by which we judge. As a result, we have suffered a cultural breakdown of sorts, in areas like education, family life, crime and drug abuse, civic duty and public services." (The De-valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children).

As parents, we need to make the family a "Confessional rather than a Courtroom". See that you never convert your family into a courtroom; instead let it be a confessional. If the husband and wife start arguing like attorneys, in an attempt to justify their behavior, their family becomes a court of law and nobody wins. On the other hand, if the husband and the wife -- as in a confessional -- are ready to admit their faults and try to correct them and make amends, the family becomes a heavenly one. "Like father like son" is an old saying, and very often true. Hence if the parents fail to do what is right and just in the sight of God, and their children, possibly, these kids will copy from them.

Both parents and children need to grant forgiveness and ask for forgiveness. If you had parents who were abusive, parents who mistreated you or manipulated you, you probably have a lot of hurt today when we talk about parents. God knows about that hurt; God cares about that hurt, and God understands why you hurt. As in all relationships, in the parent-child relationship too, there needs to be love, repentance, forgiveness and healing on both sides. Both the parent and the child should be able to say, "I was wrong, I am sorry, please forgive me and forget."

On the Feast of the only perfect Family that ever lived on this earth, all parents must examine themselves and see how well they are fulfilling the grave responsibility which God has placed on them, as their "Children are a gift from God to them." i.e. Children serve as the joy of their parents' young years and the help and comfort of their old age, but they are also a gift for which their parents are accountable before God, as they must, in the end, return these, His children, to Him.

On the other hand, Sirach reminds children of their duty to honor their parents – even when it becomes difficult. The first reward is "riches," and the second is long life: "Whoever reveres his father will live a long life." Furthermore, he reminds children that God blesses them if they obey, respect, and show compassion to their father. Let us, therefore, pray for the grace of caring for one another in our own families, for each member of the parish family, and for all families of the universal Church.

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