

### **SERMON – HOLY FAMILY 2025.**

*It is just a few days since Xmas day, but we should remember as we gather here today, that it is still Xmas day, because we are still within the Xmas octave, the 8 days of Xmas in which every day is celebrated as Xmas day. In this octave of day there are some wonderful feast days since Xmas, in recent days we have celebrated the feast of St. Stephen and then the feast of St. John and just yesterday the feast of the Holy Innocents. The Sunday within the Xmas octave is always celebrated as the Feast of the Holy Family-very appropriately I think at this Xmas time putting family life up for celebration.*

*So today we are asked to consider the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus today, and to use them to help us reflect on our own family lives, whatever kind of family we belong to. It might seem impossible to you to do this though, because the Holy family are presented as being so perfect, they set an impossible example to follow. But yes, they were holy, but they can certainly be an inspiration to us, because they did not have life easy. We heard today of their flight into Egypt, becoming refugees, living a very unstable life, I wonder what Mary said to Joseph when he told here that an Angel had told him in a dream to go to Egypt. We know of the possible scandal surrounding the conception and birth of the child, of Joseph even considering divorcing Mary. We know how much later on in life, how when Jesus was 12 years old, his parents were so concerned and worried about him staying behind in Jerusalem, and even according to Mark, some of his family thinking he had gone mad when he began his public ministry. And even at times Jesus giving the impression that he was disowning his family. Theirs was not an easy family life, I bet they didn't describe themselves as a holy family.*

*I think therefore that they can be a inspiration to us, in the way that they overcame their problems, stayed united, through courage, perseverance and faith. Which is where our most important reading comes in-the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today, from Paul's letter to the Colossians. It is a wonderful passage full of such good advice for all of our family life and relationships. Yes, some of it is old fashioned, but it was written 2000 years ago, but the heart of it is good advice. It talks about being responsible for one another, to serve one another, to care for one another-especially in our close families. That we should forgive one another if hurts are done, we should have the courage and perseverance to work at family life, it isn't easy, it is so hard so much of the time.*

*In our time there are many different kinds of families, families divided by death, divorce or separation, children who perhaps don't see much of one parent, families that are often divided, ruled by anger, resentment and hurt. So many children perhaps, perhaps some adults here today might find the first reading hard to listen to, because it talks of honouring parents, especially our fathers, since many parents and fathers don't deserve to be honoured in such a way. But all these problems, which have always been there, and are not just a part of this modern world, help to make this feast today even more important, because if family life is under threat we need to work ever harder at protecting it and cherishing it. And I don't just mean the quaint image of 2 parents and 2.4 kids, whatever families we have, whatever problems there may be, let's protect what we have. Let's persevere in building up our relationships in our families. Paul's advice today is very special, we should all read it when we go home and through this week, it is wonderful advice, we do need to forgive one another, serve one another, cherish one another, in our strengths and in our weaknesses, and yes, even in all of our failures. This after all is the message of Christ, that he came to forgive us our sins, he loved us despite all of our*

*imperfections, and we are called to do the same to others especially those closest to us. After all in the Our Father we ask for forgiveness and in return promise to forgive others in our turn.*

*So read and ponder Paul's words, let them be your inspiration in this Xmas octave, cherish those who are near to you, so that your families may grow stronger, whatever kind of families they are, and so that our Parish and Church, the very body and family of Christ may grow strong.*

*"Be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom, ....and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

*May God bless you and your families this Christmas time.*