

Feast of the Holy Family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus (B): Christian Family is Destined to be Holy

Genesis 15:1-6, 21:1-3; Psalm 105:1-2,3-4,5-6,8-9; Colossians 3:12-2, Luke 2:22-40

Dear friends and family of CCST,

"Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways" (cf Ps 105:1).

The Feast of the Holy Family, celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas, reminds us that Christmas is for the family, and family is where salvation starts. The family of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus provides a beautiful model of an ideal Christian family. Joseph is God-fearing, just, righteous, a silent worker, a good provider, and a protector. Mary is prayerful, simple, kind-hearted, attentive, and a good listener. Jesus is obedient, respectful, and gracious. This holy family offers a shining example for all families to follow.

However, it is essential to recognize that their family was not exempt from challenges. Their story in the Scriptures presents numerous trials and crosses they had to bear. In today's gospel, Simeon had predicted in the Temple that a sword of sorrow would pierce Mary's soul (cf Lk 2:35). We can imagine the number of distressing occasions in this family's life, but despite them all, their love for each other and faith in God kept them together and thrived amid their trials and crosses.

How can our family sustain the journey towards holiness? Holiness is a gift from God through the sacrament of Baptism. However, it is not imposed on us but calls us to freely respond and live it daily. This week, consider the three points for further prayer and reflection.

First and foremost, we should trust the Lord just as Abraham did to follow God's guidance, even when the path ahead appears uncertain or challenging (cf Gen 15:1-6). Trust grows when we cultivate our relationship with God. One way to develop this trust is by observing religious traditions and practices, as Joseph, Mary, and Jesus did. They faithfully celebrated events like the Feast of Passover, the rite of purification, and the presentation of their firstborn to the Temple, as mentioned in today's gospel reading. By honoring these traditions, we acknowledge God's sovereignty because our family would not be able to thrive without Him. Parents play a crucial role in passing down traditions and, as their children's first faith teachers, teach them how to pray and actively participate in Sunday worship. Through words and actions, parents show their children how loving and gracious our Heavenly Father is.

Secondly, families need to grow together in service. The Holy Family of Nazareth serves as an example for us all. They teach us about a life dedicated to serving others. Mary immediately went to her cousin Elizabeth's house after saying yes to God to serve her. Although Joseph may not have many spoken lines in the Holy Family's story, his obedience to God speaks volumes about the importance of nurturing and protecting life - especially for those who are weak or disadvantaged. Christian family does not exist for itself but is essential to God's plan to build a community centered around Him. This happens when families care for and love those who are most vulnerable - such as children, the sick, the elderly, poor and in need. Christian families are like mustard seeds that help create a communion of individuals, each contributing their unique gifts.

Lastly, forgiveness is essential within family relationships. St. Paul exhorts us to bear each other's faults and be willing to forgive unconditionally just as the Lord forgives us (Col 3:13). Conflicts are bound to arise between family members as it is a reality of human relationships. In our materialistic society, where instant gratification is valued, and a disposable mentality prevails, practicing patience, understanding, and forgiveness can be challenging. The words of St. Paul encourage us to foster an environment of gentleness and love within the family, for it is important to cultivate healthy emotional bonds. Cultivating emotional bonds takes time and effort. These bonds act as batteries that wear out over time and need recharging. Therefore, families must have "charging stations" to replenish emotional connections, like honest dialogue and attentive listening, quality family time spent together, celebrating traditions, serving others, praying together, or sharing meals, without which thriving would be challenging.

Ultimately, the Holy Eucharist is the compelling charging station that keeps our family together. It is a heavenly "charging station" God provided for all families. From it is Jesus, the divine food that heals, reconciles, unites and brings us to our eternal destiny; hence, he repeatedly said:

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst" (Jn 6:35).

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51).

"Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (Jn 6:53).

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (Jn 6:56).

And many times, over!

May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph continue to walk with us and guide our families on the journey to holiness.

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