

HOLY FAMILY

Luke 2: 41-52

The Holy family's feast day is particularly special to our St. Mary's parish family, because of the stain glass of the Holy family at the front of the church. On some sunny days it creates a hologram, that when looking from the narthex into the church, the Holy Family appears almost over the altar in the middle of the church.

God created us to live in a family to teach us of His love for us. I have come to believe that God's frustration with mankind is the same today as it has been throughout history. It is mankind's failure to believe in God's great love for us.

In our first reading, written in the second century B.C., Sirach, speaks of reverence for one's parents in words that have a timeless quality. In our second reading from Colossians, Paul presents practical ways in which the bond of love expresses itself within the Christian community, including family relations. Our

gospel presents the Holy Family as just that a family. It is the only information we have about Jesus between His birth and the beginning of His ministry. In the story Jesus comes off as precocious, and if not disobedient he was pushing it.

Our Catholic faith has a special devotion to the Holy Family. When you get as old as I am, its hard to remember anything from our early childhood, but I do remember having to place the initials J M J standing for Jesus , Mary, and Joseph ,with a cross over the M on every single paper or drawing from the 1st grade thru the 8th. This was the symbol for the Holy family in our school.

The church has always held, the Holy Family up as a model for all families. That's right! the family with Joseph [the man God chose to be the human father of His son] Mary [the mother of God, who was sinless] and Jesus [the second person of the trinity, fully human and fully divine. One might think that the church's expectations are a little high. I don't know about your family, but ours, doesn't quite measure up.

It may help a little if we realize that

Joseph and Mary were human beings with feelings and emotions, and Jesus is both Human and divine. How did they handle day to day life? Decisions? Finances? Church? work ? play? Did they have disagreements? Was Jesus as a child and teenager compliant, or non-compliant? Did Mary cook and clean? How and what did they teach their child? We have very little written about their life as a family, just; “Jesus grew in wisdom and grace”, the infancy narratives, and the story, in our gospel today, of Jesus being lost for three days. There is nothing written that would suggest that their life together was not similar to that of an ordinary family of their time.

Was the Holy Families purpose different than that of other families, even families today? I think not!!!! The family is a structure of our creation within which children are born to be loved, nurtured, taught, and grow, physically, mentally, in relationship with others, and with God their heavenly Father. This is exactly what the Holy family provided for Jesus.

As human beings we are created to live in relationship to each other, and to our God. From the

family we learn this. It is the family that can provide the most effective environment, in which a child is loved and taught, and in which the child's first relationships are formed. The child learns to accept, respond to, and give love, because of its experience of unconditional love from its parents. It is from this experience, that, as the child matures in his faith, he learns to accept God's unconditional love, respond to it, and give it to others. It is from the family that a teenager should learn that his life is not about Him, but about us. If God and His Church are not important to a family, then God and his church will probably not be important to the young adults that are products of that family.

Peggy and I are from the generation called "Baby Boomers. In studies, and an article that I recently read, 75% of the young adults who are products of families led by baby boomers want nothing to do with organized religion. We have not done a very good job of leading our children to God's love.

Many of the ideas and messages that our children and young adults get from the world we live in, run counter to the central tenants of our faith. The competition for the

eyes, ears, hearts and minds of our children is unbelievable. The noise, access to information from, media, TV, movies, the internet, and smart phones, creates an environment that our children learn from, that we parents have little or no control of. What are our children learning, and who are they learning it from? Who's teaching them what's right and what's wrong? Who's teaching them about their faith, about God? In the battle over the souls of our children, and it is a battle, the family stands in the breach between; Good and Evil, love and selfishness. Is your family ready for this daunting responsibility? Here we can learn from the Holy family.

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| 1] Are we faithful to our Catholic faith? The Sacraments? | 2] We cannot teach our children what we do not know, and live ourselves. Our Faith is a journey, where are we on our journey? |
| 3] Does our family pray and read scripture together? | 4] Are our children attending Catholic schools or if not are they attending the religious instruction provide for our children here |

at St Mary's?

**of important things is our children's
with God?**

world we cannot raise our children as we were

raised, We have to bring them closer, listen to them,

communicate, desire to understand what they are

thinking. They are such a precious, precious gift.

**We can't effectively teach our children by preaching, rules and
boundaries. We can teach by example, by our own witness. We, teach
our children to love, by our love, by our choosing joy, by the way we
live our lives, by what's important to us.**

**The world tells our children that they can achieve being loved,
achieve their happiness, by how they look, what they have, who their
friends are, how much money they have, what job they have, how
successful they are, how smart they are. Our children are getting
their identities from this process of achievement and competition. A**

5] Where on our list

relationship

6] In today's

DISASTER !!

We are God's children! that is our identity. Our children are God's children. If our children are loved unconditionally, in their family, then they can grow in the truth of that love and in God's love. They will learn of God's love from your love, and they will learn their catholic faith from you. They are God's children, they need no other identity!!!!

When we first moved to Jackson our children were 8, 6, and 3, our baby girl is now 37. When our children grow into young adults we often wish we had done more to teach them their faith, to prepare them for life. We should realize not only that they are in God's hands, but that they always were. It is never too late to be a witness of our Faith to our children. But we trust in the knowledge that God loves them more than even we do. He loves them as they are, not as we or anyone else thinks they should be.

The most important thing we can do for our children, at any age, is to truly realize that we and they are loved by God as we are, and live like it. We know because of His love that we are important and

precious to Him. We value ourselves and all others because God values us. How do we live with this knowledge of God's love for us? We order our lives because of His love, and we choose to be happy. This might sound kind of silly, but it should be the most serious thing in our lives. We choose to be happy because we know He loves us and we have accepted being loved by Him. Why would we not be happy? Paul tells us in Philippians chapter 4 how to be happy if we are having trouble choosing to be so: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things". Happiness is a choice, Paul reminds us to think of the goodness in our lives and we will find plenty of reason to be happy. There is much more goodness in our lives than anything else, but we must choose to see it so.

The family is a foundation of our human existence, from it we are to learn of God's personal love for us. The salvation of our children, while we are to help, is still God's work. We all must respond to

God's spirit within us. As parents we love, we pray, we hope, all have to respond to God's love.