

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY 2020

All of us come from families and it doesn't matter how imperfect they may be. Family is the basic unit of the Church and society. Family plays a great role in human formation and growth as it provides the suitable environment for Christian virtues to flourish. Jesus was born into a human family because He wanted to have a mother and father like us. Today we celebrate the Feast of that Holy family. As we do so, may we pray for our own families.

In a happy family, both parents and children contribute their share each playing their respective roles. Parents are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for and training their children in both worldly and spiritual matters. This training usually begins early in life and the best training is through parental example. Sirach has reminded children of their duty to honor their parents for God will reward them with riches and a long life. He reminds them that God will bless them if they obey, revere and show compassion to their parents.

Christian virtues need to flourish in our families. St. Paul advises us to clothe ourselves with heartfelt mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and forgiveness. Love should be the chord binding all in a family. In a truly holy family all members are respected, cherished, nurtured, supported and united through the bond of love. A family is considered Christian if Christ is at its center. Where Christ reigns, love abounds, joy is shared and sorrows are eased.

Like many of our families, the Holy family had its own share of hardships. They felt sorrow, fear and uncertainty as promised by Simeon. No family is without its own share of stresses and difficulties. Raising children is harder these days because of the many distractions around us. Parents you have a responsibility of guiding your children to grow up in the faith. Don't leave them at home when you come to church.

With the intercession of the Mary and Joseph, we need to make our families more like a confessional rather than a courtroom. A senior Judge congratulated a couple upon their marriage with a pertinent piece of advice: "See that you never convert your family into a courtroom; instead let it be like a confessional". I guess he/she must have been Catholic! If a husband and wife start arguing like attorneys in an attempt to justify their behavior, their family will be like a courtroom 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, there will be peace and harmony in the family. As I always tell those getting married; "when you are wrong admit it and if you are right just be quiet."

Each family is called to holiness. By the sacrament of marriage, Jesus sanctifies not only the spouses but also the entire family. The husband, wife and children attain holiness when they discharge their duties faithfully, trusting in God, and drawing on the power of God through prayer. A family that prays together stays together. Remember to say your prayers beginning with the grace at every meal. You can then pray the Rosary together, begin a weekly family Bible study like going through next Sunday's readings or even decide to attend to daily Mass.

We must remember that from good families we get the vocations to the priesthood and religious life. So, may we create an environment that will nurture these special vocations in our families and give the Church a chance at getting more ministers.

May we pray for the grace to care for one another in our own families, for each member of our parish family, and for all families of the universal Church. May God bless all your families in the New Year 2021.