

Homily: Holy Family 2023

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Today the Church honors the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, which is the supreme model for all families in living out their individual vocations as husbands, wives and children – that is, in striving to be holy, to be saints, within the family setting.

WHY is the Holy Family the supreme model for all families? Because it is THE HOLIEST family that every lived!

Just think about it: The child Jesus was perfect God and perfect man in one divine person; the Blessed Virgin Mary was immaculately conceived and free from all sin for entire life; and St. Joseph was filled with grace second only to his spouse, the Virgin Mary.

We can imagine the boy Jesus working with St. Joseph in his carpenter shop – everything done to perfection, at a gentle, deliberate pace.

We can consider the conversations that took place around the dinner table, discussing the divine things: What did Jesus share with them about God and His divine origin, about creation, about the events from the Old Testament which prepared for His coming, His future life of preaching the Gospel, which would culminate with His death on the cross?

We can meditate on the time they spent in deep prayer at the day's end, when they contemplated all these mysteries.

Pope St. Paul VI wrote a famous homily on the Holy Family which on this feast appears in the Liturgy of the Hours (the official prayer book for priests and religious). I look forward to reading it every year, and this year I reprinted it in this week's bulletin.

Pope Paul VI describes the holy home of Nazareth as a “school” where we are able to *study* and *meditate upon* the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and thereby to *imitate* their holiness as they lived out their lives in a family setting.

He says that here, “everything he is eloquent, all [of it] has meaning.”

I think that today, devotion to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is needed more than any time in the history of the Church; nay, in the history of humanity.

Never has there been such confusion over what a family is, what constitutes a true family.

Why is this? Because attempts have been made in recent years to redefine the family; in reality, to de-form it, by making it into something contrary to God's plan – as a sanctuary of love and life within the context of marriage.

These attempts to de-form the family have *accelerated* especially in recent years as a result of attempts to *redefine marriage* as God instituted it, between one man and one woman.

This has caused mass confusion in the minds of so many; and, I must say, that Pope Francis has – sadly, and scandalously – added to this confusion by giving permission for blessings to be administered to same-sex couples.

Read my commentary on this permission in this week's bulletin.

Today, there is so much confusion, especially among young people, about what it means to be male or female. Many youth today think they can change their natural, God-given sexuality, as a male or a female, merely by *willing* it.

Imagine if someone had told you 20 years ago that this was going to be the state of things in 2023 – you would have said, "Oh, no, you're crazy."

I am firmly convinced that this confusion is Satanic at its root.

This is so sad. And please know, in charity, we must have empathy for these young people who are so confused; we must pray for them; and, most importantly, we must *never affirm* them, but rather *tell them the truth*.

Why? Because charity, authentic Christian love, is always practiced in accord with the truth.

The family is the vital, fundamental cell of society. As the family goes, so goes the culture.

Satan knows this well, and for this reason that has ALWAYS set his sights on destroying the family, for example, by sowing seeds of division between spouses, and trying to separate what God has joined – through divorce, which breaks up the family.

Children need a father and mother for healthy development – moral, spiritual and psychological. The societal consequences of children growing up without a father present are devastating: We need just look around at our own neighborhoods.

So let us return now to contemplating the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, our supreme model for Christian families.

What lessons can our families learn from this holiest of families?

Pope Paul VI says the first lesson is one of “silence”: We must “appropriate its great value,” he says, in the home and family.

He says that amid all the noise and uproar present in modern family life, families should strive cultivate this “admirable and indispensable condition of mind”; he says “May *the silence* of Nazareth teach us recollection, inwardness, the disposition to listen to good inspirations and teachings . . . May it teach us the need for and the value of study, of meditation, . . . of the prayer which God sees in secret.”

Pope Paul VI stresses the need for the family to exist as a “communion of love” between husbands and wives, parents and children; and he speaks of the work that goes on both inside and outside the home, praising what he calls the “nobility of work” by which the family is sustained.

Let us, on this Feast of the Holy Family, pray for all families, that they may look to the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph as a source of inspiration and strength, especially in practicing silence, in order to make the home and the family a holy sanctuary of prayer and contemplation of things eternal.