**Homily for the Feast of the Holy Family***Rev. Francis D. Kim*

 Pope Francis said about family life, “How precious is the family as the privileged place for transmitting the faith. How important grandparents and parents are for family life, for passing on the human and religious heritage, which is so essential for each and every society. How important it is to have intergenerational exchanges and dialogue, especially within the context of the family.”

 Today, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which is the model for all Christian families. It is customary to celebrate this feast on the first Sunday after the celebration on the birth of Jesus at Christmas. It is a time when we can reflect on the quality of our own family life in the light of the First Holy Family.

 The Feast fo the Holy Family points out the fully human condition of Jesus. He didn’t come into the world a fully-formed adult, but He was born into a family as an infant. He needed a family to take care of Him, to teach Him, to share faith with Him, to enable Him to grow and develop day-by-day and year-by-year just as we all do!

 So, the humanity of Jesus was real. Jesus did not pretend to be human. Really, “the word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The baby Jesus became an adult within a human family. God chose a human family for His divine Child, that Jesus might know the love, concern, and discipline of real, flesh, and blood parents.

 We often tend to imagine that the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph must have been an extremely happy family. But, like every other family, it also had from time to time its ups and downs, its joys and sorrows, its problems and difficulties.

 In fact, challenges faced them from the very beginning. Imagine! The mother was a virgin, and the father was not the biological father of the Child. They had to escape from the King, Herod, then, they wandered from place to place in Egypt to fine safety as refugees. And, they were not a rich family.

 But, this family freely accepted God’s plan, and they always said “yes” for God’s will. Even when they didn’t understand what would happen, they always trusted in God’s love and mercy. They showed heartfelt compassion, respect, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love each other. They prayed together and stayed together and had fun together as one family.

 In love and prayer, Mary and Joseph encouraged and fostered Child Jesus with special care. At home, the Child was nurtured by example and faith of His parents. In this Holy Family, Jesus grew to maturity and prepared His mission for saving people.

 The family is God’s holy ground. The home is the first school of Christian life and a school for human enrichment. As Jesus grew up within the family in God’s plan, God has a plan for each and every family. Each and every Family is the domestic Church.

 In the family, children will learn how to love, how to pray, and how to get up when they fall. From generation to generation, children will learn respect, reverence, piety, patience, and compassion. And, they will grow up. And, next generation will learn from them.

 We must imitate the Holy Family in our own relationships with our family members. Love each other and forgive each other even when we do not understand each other.

 Also, we have to remember in prayer and try to support those families, which are struggling with difficulties. Our care, concern, service, and working for justice for others must reach beyond our family to include all. We are one family in God’s love. Our parish community is one family.

 As we continue our celebration of the birth of Christ, today we come to see the family home at Nazareth, and Mary and Joseph show us the way to holiness and happiness in our family life.

 The Christmas season is a good time to reflect on our family, whatever its size and shape. Think about how we are making the truth and love of Christ present in our family.

 Families, big or small, in struggle or pain, are all places where love can be shared. The family, even one with problems, is our Nazareth where through all the dynamics of family life, good and bad, people can still grow in wisdom, age, and grace.

 Remember: wherever and whenever the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph went together, God was always with them. With our families, God is also with us in our good time and in our bad, in our joys and in our sorrows, in times of plenty and in times of need. God is always among us in our family!

 The Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph pray for us!