**Homily** **for the Feast of the Holy Family**

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        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 Sunday immediately following our celebrations 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 Church’s First Holy Family.

        Jesus spent thirty years in family life before He began His ministry, so we can understand the importance and priority of family life for Jesus. We 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.

        They were confronted with many 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 find safety as refugees.

        And, today’s Gospel reports the tension within this family like every other family has it. When the parents found their precious Child in the Temple, they were so anxious. They lost the Child and were looking for Him for three days. But, the Child asked, “Why were you looking for me?” Being a parents to Jesus could not have been easy.

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

        In love and prayer, Mary and Joseph encouraged and fostered Child Jesus with special care. 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 the world.

        Just as God freely chose to send His Son to save His people in the world, God chose a human family for His divine Child, that Jesus might know the love, concern, and discipline of real, flesh, and blood parents. As a human child, like all other children, Jesus grew up physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually in the family.

        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.

        So, Pope Francis said, “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.”

        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. We also have 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. Because we are one family in God’s love.

        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 lives.

        The Christmas season is a good time to reflect on our family, whatever its size and shape. 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!

        Family life is most often and most profoundly deepened around the table where meals are shared. May our sharing of the Eucharistic meal nourish and deepen within each of us the desire to build up good and loving families and live in perfect love and communion with God.

        The holy family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph pray for us!