

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, YEAR C

The humble beginning of each member of the Holy Family is very striking. Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary, were not of royal or wealthy families. Joseph was a carpenter, a trade that was not highly regarded during his time. Matthew 13:55 captures this point: “Then they scoffed, ‘He’s just a carpenter’s son, and we know Mary, his mother, and his brothers – James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas.’” Jesus was born in an unusual place, a farm shed. Animals’ manger was his baby crib!

Another point for reflection is the difficult beginning of the Holy Family. Joseph took Mary as his wife but had no sexual relations with her. Joseph became Jesus’ foster father since Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit. Joseph handled the birth of Jesus all alone, in the silent of the night. And shortly after the birth of Jesus, the Holy Family fled to Egypt to save Jesus from Herod. The Gospel of today tells us the trauma of Mary and Joseph when they lost sight of Jesus for three days. Anyone who has lost sight of his or her child for a few seconds would understand the panic Mary and Joseph endured for three days.

Pope Paul VI says that the Holy Family is a school of Nazareth where we learn true science of life and higher wisdom of divine truths. Therefore, the Holy family is a model for all families and all communities.

First, the Holy Family teaches us not to be discouraged by humble and difficult beginnings. Mary and Joseph were not discouraged by all the difficulties that came their way.

Second, there is always a message from God during difficult times. We are to listen, as Mary and Joseph did, in order to receive divine direction. Mary and Joseph listened to God, and courageously shouldered and triumphed over all the difficult situations.

Third, the Holy Family teaches us to work together in harmony at all times. The Gospel tells us how Mary and Joseph worked together in search of Jesus: “Thinking that he was in the caravan, **they** [Mary and Joseph] journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, **they** returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days **they** found him in the temple...And his mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you done this to us? **Your father and I** have been looking for you ...’ and he went down with **them** and came to Nazareth.” Neither Mary nor Joseph blamed the other for presumption and negligence. Together, they went in search of Jesus and took him home when they found him.

Fourth, the Holy Family teaches us the value of obedience. Mary and Joseph were obedient to God by doing the will of God. The Gospel tells us about Jesus’ obedience to Mary and Joseph: “And he was obedient to them...and he advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.” Obedience does not disappoint. Obedience always brings blessings. On the other hand, disobedience leads to downfall. The Holy Family teaches us to surrender to God’s will and plan and not to cling to our will and plan.

Fifth, the experience of Mary and Joseph after the feast of Passover teaches us to look upon Jesus at all times and not lose sight of him. When Mary and Joseph lost sight of Jesus, they experienced “great anxiety” (words of Mary). Their journey stopped. They went in search of Jesus, found him, took him and their journey began again. When we lose sight of Jesus we plunge into great anxiety, and many things go wrong. Progress is no longer possible. But if we keep Jesus in sight we are free from anxiety as he, himself, leads the journey.

We pray that in the coming year, we will follow in the footsteps of the Holy family, and we will keep Jesus in sight at all times.

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