

HOMILY OF THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH YEAR B, 2020

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Psalm 128:1-5; Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40

The celebration of today's feast is of utmost importance to all of us because we all belong to families; and the family is the first and the greatest institution God created. Unfortunately, there is an increase in the number of disordered families. Since families are the foundations and the constituents of societies, more disordered families mean more disordered societies. Therefore, the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is a model for all families.

Being a holy family does not mean that everything was well and smooth for them. It was a lowly family with many ups and downs. Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary's pregnancy brought a troubling situation for both Mary and Joseph. They, however, accepted the situation when each of them was ministered to by the angel of the Lord. Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). As for Joseph, "When [he] awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded, and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son" (Matthew 1:24-25).

Mary gave birth to Jesus in a very difficult circumstance. After a long journey on foot from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census, a distance of about 100 miles, there was no inn to lodge in. They went to a shed in a farm where Mary gave birth to Jesus. It was not recorded that any nurse or midwife was available to help. We can only imagine how tough it was for the two of them all alone.

As we read in the Gospel of today, at the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Mary was told that a sword would pierce her heart. Her first experience of a sword piercing her heart was when the family fled to Egypt to save Jesus from being murdered by Herod. A sword pierced her heart when Jesus got separated from her and Joseph after the feast of Passover in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple after searching for him for three days. Finally, a sword pierced Mary's heart when she witnessed Jesus' crucifixion and death. In all the ups and downs, Mary and Joseph remained together. The Gospel of today concludes, Jesus "grew under them and became strong, filled with wisdom; and God's favor rested upon him" (Luke 2:40).

We have so much to learn from the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph that can help us to keep our families from falling apart. Pope Paul VI describes the Holy Family as a school of Nazareth where we learn true science of life and the higher wisdom of divine truth.

The first reading reminds us that, "God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority over her [children]." Unfortunately, many parents have handed over this God given authority to their children. The reverse has become the case; whereby many children have authority over their parents, and able to control and manipulate their parents as they wish.

The first reading enumerates various blessings received by children who honor their parents, and who take care of their parents in their old age. However, Sirach 3:16 mentions curses upon children who disrespect their parents, and who abandon their parents in their old age: "Those who neglect their father are like blasphemers; those who provoke their mother are accursed by their Creator". On the other hand, the second reading instructs parents not to provoke their children, so that they may not become discouraged (Colossians 3:21).

There is no perfect family. For this reason, the second reading encourages us on how to cope with family imperfections to avoid breakdowns and disintegrations. The reading says, "Put on ... heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. ... And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, ... And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, ... with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus..." (Colossians 3:12-17). I would like to add that it is also important that family members pray together; because, "A family that prays together stays together."

May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph pray for our families and society to be saved from disorderliness, breakdowns and disintegration. Amen.

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