

## Holy Family, 2012

I want to start out with a no-brainer of a statement: Family matters. The Christmas season never fails to bring this to our attention. We are all from a family, we are all in a family and we are all destined for a family.

But because we have an imperfect nature, family relationships can be all over the map.

In addition, we live in a world that tells us to put our own needs and wants first. Therefore, infidelity, addictions and deviant behaviors of all types have been ruining and breaking family relationships since the beginning of human history.

There are attempts in our nation to redefine what marriage is. There are constant attacks against our fidelity and upon our consciences. Contraception has had the effect of making people objects for our satisfaction.

Yet, with all this against a family, Jesus chose to become a baby, born of a mother and father and to spend all but His last years living in an ordinary human family?

In doing so He both honors and sanctifies the family. In doing so He calls fathers and mothers, children and siblings not to a higher standard, but to the highest standard, and He shows by His own pattern that to live in harmony within the family is indeed doable.

And of course Mary and Joseph stand as the model “par excellence” of respect and faithfulness between spouses.

The family advice we hear in today’s readings - for mothers, fathers and children - is all solid and practical. Each exhortation instructs us, out of love, to put the other first. When seen in this light, when done in love of God, words like submission, obedience, reverence and honor become acts of true freedom. They become virtues. It is what builds a happy and harmonious home.

Happy homes are the fruit of our faithfulness to the Lord, for genuine love toward others flows from this faithfulness.

Jesus shows us this in today’s Gospel.

His obedience to His earthly parents flows directly from His obedience to the will of His heavenly Father.

Isn’t it interesting that Joseph and Mary are not identified by name, but three times today are called “his parents” and are referred to separately as his “mother” and “father.”

The emphasis is all on their “family” ties to Jesus. These ties are emphasized here so that Jesus, in the first words He speaks in Luke’s Gospel, can point us beyond that earthly relationship to the Fatherhood of God.

In what Jesus calls “My Father’s house,” every family finds its true meaning and purpose.

The Temple we read about in the Gospel today is God's house, but it's also an image of the family of God that family of which we are destined to be a part .

Whatever the size and shape of our families, we are to build up this household, this family, this living temple of God.... until the day He reveals His new dwelling among us, and says of every person: "Welcome, beloved child of my Father, welcome good and faithful servant."

This is the Good News of this Feast; and it is Good News indeed for it is made available, through Our Lord to every one of us.

May God's blessing be on you and your families in this New Year.2