

Holy Family - A
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14;
Colossians 3:12-21;
Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23
Little Flower - 12/29/13

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Today's feast reminds us of the importance of family.

The reading from Sirach suggests the importance of parents in the lives of their children: "*God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons.*" Parents, however, must never forget that children learn what they live and live what they learn. We know that there are no perfect families, no perfect marriages, no perfect husbands or wives, and no perfect parents or children. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul enumerates the qualities that make for healthy families. Today's Gospel recounts the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and their return to Israel. This reminds us of the need to put God at the center of our families and to trust God as St. Joseph did.

Wikipedia defines family as "a group of people affiliated by consanguinity (by recognized birth), affinity (by marriage), or co-residence/shared consumption..."¹ The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, was a traditional family—father, mother, and child. As a Church and as a parish, we have to face the fact that today there are fewer and fewer traditional families in our society. It seems to me that as a Christian community we need to be supportive of the members of all families. I would suggest that as a parish we are very welcoming to non-traditional families. However, we probably could be more inclusive, i.e., look for more ways of engaging them in the life of our parish. In both traditional and non-traditional families, the adults are striving to love, support, and care for each other and are trying to do their best to raise their children. Our support for the members of all families is good for them, good for their children, and good for the Church and society.

The Christianity of Jesus is a Christianity of church or community. I have often said that Jesus is the great psychologist. He understood how important relationships and connections are to people. We cannot live, or at least we cannot live well, without emotional intimacy in our lives. The New Testament presents us with several images of the Church: the Body of Christ, the People of God, the Bride of Christ, and the New Israel. However, I think in today's fragmented society, a good image for the Church, an image with which we can identify, is the image of the Church as the family of God.

In today's society, there are a lot of people who for all practical purposes are alone, lonely, disconnected, or alienated from their families and extended families. It seems to me that one of the gifts a church community can give them is to welcome them as part of our church family. Although many of these people are already members of the Church, we want them to find a home and a family here at Little Flower. For this to happen, we have to become more of a family than we already are. We probably should all make a greater effort to get to know each other. We probably should all pay more attention when someone is missing for more than a week or two and check up on them or contact the parish for us to check up on them. This is what real families do!

My brothers and sisters, celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family, we also celebrate our own families. Today is a day to be grateful for our immediate and extended family. However, today is also a day to forgive the members of our families, living and deceased, for their failings and to ask forgiveness at least from God for our own failings as family members.

¹Wikipedia, "Family," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family>.