

Feast of The Holy Family

Sirach 3:2-6,12-14

Col 3:12-17

Mt 2:13-15,19-23

Today the Church honours the Holy Family of Joseph, Mary & Jesus in order to point out to the faithful that the modern attitude that freedom requires us to not depend on anything or anyone, is utter nonsense. Humans begin life as complete dependents on their parents, who of course become their absolute servants, so why is dependency rejected among adults?

In 2005, Pope Benedict XVI wrote that in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve chose power over love. Power makes demands of others, but love shares with others, and in that shared life, freedom develops through living *with* and *for* each other. A visible characteristic of our time is the insatiable yearning for humans to make connections but are reluctant to make commitments. This fear is paralysing because it can only be overcome if one has confidence in oneself. Cardinal Sarah in his book, 'The Day is Far Spent,' believes this is the common root of the crisis of marriage and the crisis of vocations to ministry in the Church.

We can only truly say, 'Yes' to each other if we say, 'Yes' to God. All the members of the Holy Family said, 'Yes' to God even though they knew that their 'Yes' came at a cost to themselves. When Gabriel came to Mary to announce God's invitation to her to be the mother of God's Messiah, even though she knew that as an unmarried woman there would be a huge social cost, she still said, 'Yes.'

God appeared in dreams to Joseph. He was told not to be afraid to abandon the choice he made regarding a divorce from Mary, but to support her and her unborn child. There was also huge social implications for him, but he said, 'Yes' to God. Later when he was told to take the Holy Family into Egypt to keep them safe, he obeyed. When he was told to leave Egypt but go to Nazareth rather than Judea because the new king Archelaus was still hostile to Jesus, he didn't hesitate.

Jesus, the Word of God, as St John tells us, humbled Himself to become flesh and dwell among us, living a life of humble obedience even to the point of offering Himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of the world. In today's second reading, St Paul adds the word 'lowliness,' which is humility, to a list of virtues necessary for a godly life alongside forgiveness and love.

Today's first reading points out that in the Greek society of Alexander the Great, the youth were honoured and the aged devalued. The problem is that this honour is only gained at the expense of someone else. Overvaluing one group of people often leads to the devaluing of another. We have become very familiar with that in our current times. Abortion and legal suicide are also examples of this, and it disrupts harmonious relationships within human society.

In the relationship between members of the Holy Family, we see that Mary, Joseph and Jesus honour God and each other. Mary and Joseph honour Jesus despite not fully understanding Him and His relationship with His heavenly Father. Jesus honours them by

being obedient to them and so grows in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and man. As He died on the Cross, He showed love for His mother by handing her into the care of St John and the Church.

The Holy Family is the model of family life and human relationships that God has given us. Through them He shows us that as disciples of Jesus, we too must be the guardians of human nature as God has created it. When the Roman Empire began to disintegrate when it compromised with the Barbarians after their invasions, God restored physical and spiritual order through the influence of His Church.

Some modern-day Barbarians may bang on the doors of some cities and massacre their citizens, but others also create laws that devalue God's created physical and moral order. But there are signs that once again God is strengthening His Church. More people, especially young men, are recognising God's order can be found in His Church and are opening their lives to Him so they can participate in its mission. What is the mission? Jesus said, "This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). There can be nothing simpler or clearer than that.

Say, 'Yes' to God first so that the rest can follow.

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