

December 31, 2023

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Gen 15:1-6; 21:1-3

Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

Lk 2:22-40 or Lk 2:22, 39-40

GROW | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

St. Teresa of Calcutta once said, “If we love, naturally we will try to do something. First in our own home, our next door neighbor, in the country we live, in the whole world.” In this quote we see a shift from the idyllic to a hard dose of reality: love means sacrifice and service. Perhaps it’s worth asking ourselves: Does our family always get our best self? None of us is perfect, so the honest answer is probably no. If it’s tempting to think, “well, the Holy Family was perfect, so what does this feast have to do with our family?” let’s remember we are celebrating the Feast of the HOLY Family, not the feast of the perfect family. Yes, they were *holy*. They embodied this in their faith and devotion in those expanding circles of which St. Teresa spoke. They gave to God first – in today’s Gospel we see the family travel to Jerusalem to present Jesus in the temple. They then returned to Nazareth where Jesus grew strong and was “filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.”

GO | PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

What does this feast mean for us today? It means that being a *holy* family is not unattainable. St. John Paul II once said: “The Redeemer of the world chose the family as the place for his birth and growth.” (2001) In other words, God’s will was fulfilled in the simplest and most ordinary of human circumstances when Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph in a stable. He sanctified what had been profaned by sin. Are our families perfect? No. But are we holy? That is our baptismal vocation and is within our reach each and every day. With the dawn of the new year, let’s make an effort to place Christ at the center of our lives. Let’s try to love our family members with all our heart, and bear witness in our actions and words. And finally, and most importantly, we must pray with and for one another.

PRAY: Family prayer is powerful and transformative, uniting and equipping us to go out into the world each day and bear witness. Pray together: *Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.*