

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph *December 29, 2024*

“Do Thou, O Lord, bring us whom Thou hast refreshed with heavenly mysteries to imitate the example of Thy Holy Family, that at the hour of our death, with the Virgin Mother and blessed Joseph at hand, we may be received by Thee into our everlasting home.”

(Post-Communion Prayer for the Mass of the Holy Family [1962 Roman Missal])

If we were asked to provide an example of an ideal family, what example would we offer? For many, their own families not being the answer, might respond with a fondly remembered family from a television series. If we now changed the initial question and asked to provide an example of an ideal “Christian” family, then how would we answer. It would be hoped that we would immediately answer with the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Realizing this to be the most correct answer, what could we learn from their family to influence ours to become better?

In trying to provide an answer to this question, one could be tempted to dismiss the question altogether. Their family consisted of God (Jesus), the Immaculate Conception (Mary) and Saint Joseph. Who of us can compare to them? This, in turn, leads to a defeatist attitude. I cannot compare and therefore I stop trying. If we did this, if we stopped here, then we would not be able to see how we can, within our own families, learn to foster many of the same traits which made their home so very blessed. What can we learn from the Holy Family and apply to our family?

The first lesson we can learn, and maybe the most important lesson, is we must begin by being a religious family. The Holy Family were a good practicing religious family. Our families must be the same. We cannot claim to be a Christian family IF we do not practice our Christian faith. A Christian family must live for Christ and with Christ. A father and mother must teach their children, both through words and actions, that they are not destined for this world solely. The riches, honors and pleasures we see daily offered are fleeting at best. As desirable as they may seem, are we any less a family IF we never gain any of these? As parents, we should encourage our children to have a proper understanding of these “things of the world.” By this I mean, we should not neglect these (money, awards or things which could make our life more pleasurable), rather we must realize that these things can be used in our families’ goal, which is to assist each other in attaining heaven. By placing God first and foremost, we slowly move towards a proper relationship with the world and what it offers.

Secondly, in imitation of the Holy Family, we begin to live selflessly. Christian parents can teach their children that relationships are not based upon personal motives guided by self-interest or pleasure. Useless banter and needless bickering are shunned. Even in matters where disagreements occur, parents will remind their children that Christian homes are guided by calm, candid discussions. The need to win the argument pales in comparison to honest discussions which lead to peace, harmony and well-being within the home. Lastly, parents have the ability to stress to their children the vows they promised before God at His altar are what guides their

homes. This moves their actions and decisions rather than their emotions. The love they share is expressed in all of these decisions. It is the decision to put their faith and their family before all else.

My family, our consciences, guided by our Faith and strengthened by our reception of the Sacraments, should guide us in the way we lead our families. We are not called to excuse ourselves or our families from society. Rather, we are called to transform society through the way we live as a family, a Christ centered family.