

December 26, 2021
Feast of the Holy Family
Sir 3:2-6, 12-14
Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5
Col 3:12-21
Lk 2:41-52

WORKING ON HOLINESS IN THE FAMILY!

Ministering to the sick and the dying, in my case, is both inspiring and depressing. It is inspiring when the person I am praying for is surrounded by family and friends. On the other hand, it is depressing when the person I am praying for is alone and unconscious and not even one family member is praying with me. Thus, after the visit, I would utter a prayer to God saying: **"Lord Jesus, when my time comes I wish to have my family around."**

A couple of months ago, I got a call from Wilcox Hospital asking me to visit a patient. I complied and paid a visit to the patient. After praying with the patient, I had a short conversation with him. He was so thankful for my visit. He said, **"Father, thank you for visiting me. I have been here in this hospital for a month now and you are the only one who visited me. No one from my family cared to pay me a visit even though they are just here on the island!"** And then, he started to cry.

I am sharing these experiences of mine with you for two reasons: **first**, there is always that deep longing in each one of us to be loved and cared for by the family particularly at the end of one's journey. With the family around, united in prayer, pain is easier to bear. **Second**, I shared it with you because of the 1st reading we have heard. Prophet Sirach said, **"My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him..."** Prophet Sirach was reminding each one of us of our responsibilities to our parents. Aside from honoring them, as spelled out in the 10 Commandments, we have to take care of them especially in their old age.

Our parents took care of us when we were young, now that they are old, it is our turn to show compassion and care for them. Yes, we have busy lives to live but to just 'dump' them at the care home and not even pay a visit is, no doubt, not honorable! Not visiting them at all is truly devoid of compassion and mercy. It is un-Christian.

In our 2nd reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians we are being reminded of the behaviors we have to radiate in the context of family life and societal relations. Listen again to what he said: **"Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as**

the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.” These behaviors when ingrain/instill in us we can be certain that the family and society will grow beautifully and holy.

Do we cultivate or work on these virtues in our family? Do we promote these virtues in our places of work?

In today's gospel proclaimed we have heard the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph went to Jerusalem temple to faithfully fulfill their religious duties. The journey they had made, as a family, going to the temple demonstrated that their life at home were deeply centered on prayer and love for God's Word. As a family, praying with the community was not an option for them. It was a necessity, an essential, part of their lives. Thus, no matter how busy they were, praying with the community and reflecting on God's Word were always part of their schedule.

How's our family? Is coming to Church on Sundays an essential part of our family life? Is praying with the community and reading the bible part of our busy schedules?

We are celebrating today the **Feast of the Holy Family**. They were holy because they made sure that God was at the centered of their family life. They were holy because they were conscious of living the virtues of heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love day in and day out. They were holy because the showed concern and care for each other.

The **Feast of the Holy Family** is reminding us that holiness, in the context of the family, is always possible when all the members are conscious/aware of the call to center their lives on God. It is always possible when the members show genuine love and care for each other. It is always possible when the members encourage one another to live virtuous/moral life of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience to name a few. It is always possible when the members are conscious of being the 'image and likeness of God.'

Look at the family of **St. Therese of Lisieux** (Jan 02, 1873 - Sep 30, 1897). The whole family, starting from the parents, Zellie and Louis Martin, clearly made sure to the children that their ultimate goal was holiness of life. **And so what happened?** All their 6 children entered the convent and became nuns. Therese was canonized as a saint on May 17, 1925 and her parents, **Zellie and Louis**, were canonized as saints on October 18, 2015. The Martin family is a concrete example, aside from the family of Jesus, that holiness in the family is possible to happen.

As we continue our Eucharistic celebration, we ask God for the grace to help us live holy lives and become active contributors to the holiness of our own family.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, please make our family holy like yours. Amen.