

HOMILY for HOLY FAMILY – Year C

The Feast of the Holy Family reminded me of this cute story. The efficiency expert concluded his lecture with a note of caution. “You don’t want to try these techniques at home.”

“Why not?” asked someone from the back of the audience.

“I watched my wife’s routine at breakfast for years,” the expert explained. “She made lots of trips to the refrigerator, stove, table, & cabinets, often carrying just a single item at a time. ‘Hon,’ I suggested, ‘Why don’t you try carrying several things at once?’”

The voice from the back asked, “Did it save time?”

The expert replied, “Actually, yes. It used to take her twenty minutes to get breakfast ready. Now I do it in seven.”

Anyway, this Sunday the Church invites us to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. This Feast comes up right after the birth of Jesus to remind us the important value of family in our lives. Family gives us safety net & tradition to help us grow to our potentials and remain connected to one another in an intimate way. Otherwise, society would simply be a collection of individuals without any relation to one another at all. That is why we got to strengthen family unit if we want to have a healthy & thriving society. That is why the church calls us to look up to the Holy Family & use it as the model for our own. So, what can we learn from the Holy Family?

This Sunday’s First & Second Reading seem to give us an answer for that question. The First Reading tells us that a good, healthy family would act in this way, “The Lord sets a father in honor over his children; a mother’s authority He confirms over her sons. He who honors his father atones for sins; he stores up riches who reveres his mother... My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fails, be considerate with him... For kindness to a father will not be forgotten.” As you can see, it uses words such as honor, revere, take care of, considerate, & kindness. The last time I have looked out to the world through the news, I have not heard those words being used. In place of those, we have heard words such as disgrace, despise, neglect, rude, & meanness. In addition to that kind of vocabulary & way of life, we have seen constant fighting & shooting in many homes. No one seems to honor or revere one’s family members because everyone supposedly has equal rights & freedom to do whatever he/she wants these days. Worst yet, few people would hold in high esteem values such as considerate & kind & try to take care of their neighbors. Instead, everyone cares only about oneself & talks about what others would do for me. No wonder why our family unit has fallen apart in modern time while our society has been on fire. We need to get all human families to look up to the Holy Family & live out the values in this Sunday’s First Reading. Once they have followed that way of life, we will certainly have different kind of home & society from the current ones.

However, a Christian home cannot stop at those basic values. Today’s Second Reading wants to raise the stake a bit higher & calls us Christians to live up to the following virtues, “Because you are God’s chosen ones, holy & beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, & patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another... Over all these virtues, put on love, which binds the rest together & makes them perfect. Christ’s peace must reign in your hearts... And dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you.” As you can see, Paul challenges us to live to virtues such as mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience,

tolerance, forgiveness, love, peace, & thankfulness & make those the foundation for our families. If we reflect on the Holy Family, we would see that its members had always lived up to those virtues. They sure had turned those virtues to be the cornerstone & foundation for their family. They were always merciful & kind. They were also tolerant & forgiving. More importantly, they followed a life of love & thankfulness. That is why they were able to achieve the highest honor for their family, namely, being called the Holy Family. Unfortunately, we have been misled & called to follow social values such as pro-life or gender equality instead. That is why our families are now full of fights & divisions. Our society is inundated with violence & chaos. Until & unless our families are built on the religious values & virtues of today's two Readings, we will continue to have divisions & fights in our families. Our society will remain chaotic & violent.

In case you do not believe in building our families on religious values & virtues, today's Gospel gives us a solid proof on how the Holy Family was able to deal with a challenging situation & still stay in love & peace with one another. Apparently they followed their Jewish custom & went up to Jerusalem Temple to celebrate the Feast of Passover. On the way home, they lost Jesus, almost like the Movie "Home Alone." Joseph & Marie could have screamed at Jesus & one another & turned that scary situation into an explosive fight. But, here is how the Gospel tells us about their response, "...When His parents saw Him [Jesus], they were astonished; & His mother said to Him: 'Son, why have you done this to us? You see that your father & I have been searching for you in sorrow.'" If the Holy Family did not live up to the religious values & virtues of today's two Readings, they would have a big fight with one another like what we have seen happening in our society every day. That is why we must follow their way of life instead of using social values to be the moral standards & guide for our families & society. That is who we could end the current divisions & fights in our families & society.

My dear brothers & sisters, our current political & religious leaders have failed to help us build a loving family unit & peaceful society because they have told us to follow social values instead. That is why we have seen divided families & violent society. Thankfully god has given us a solution for our current problem in the Holy Family. If we follow their way of life & live up to the religious values & virtues, we will be able to build a loving family & peaceful society. Why don't you try it out with your family & see how it turns out?