

Homily for the Feast of the Holy Family
December 30, 2018
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Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. All of our scripture readings reflect on aspects of family life including the duties and blessings that come about as a result of the faithful living of family life.

Understanding what a family is supposed to be is imperative to understanding life with God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are names that designate relationships. God expresses his relationship with us in terms of covenants which are our family bonds. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man in order to save us from our sins so that we might become Children of God. It is critically important for us to understand what a family truly is and what God intends it to be in order to understand God in three persons and our relationship with him.

If our image of the family is distorted, then our image of God is distorted. If our image of family relationships is distorted, then our understanding of our relationship with God will be distorted as well. God gives us a model of the Holy Family of Nazareth as the example to all Christians of what family life should like and how we are called to relationship with God and each other.

It is more important than ever that we look toward the Holy Family as a true model of family life to be imitated. In our current society, the institution of the family is under attack. There are forces in the world constantly at work to destroy the traditional and biblical understanding of what it means to be family. Some would like to remake the family according to their image rather than God's image. You see it constantly in the attacks to redefine marriage as being something other than between a man and a woman and God. Marriage as an institution belongs to God and is only between a man and a woman and God. It is not a relationship or a word that the state has a right to redefine.

Today's celebration of the feast of Holy Family is a good time to reflect on family life. It is important that we understand what God teaches and effectively proclaim it.

On this Feast of the Holy Family, let us consider marriage and family along three lines: structure, struggles, and strategy.

In these biblical passages which we heard today, we are given the basic structure of the family:

- A father in honor over his children
- A wife and mother who is supportive of her husband and his authority
- A husband who supports, loves, and encourages his wife
- A mother in authority over her children

- Children who honor and obey their parents
- Fathers, and by extension mothers, who instruct and admonish their children, not in a way that discourages them, but rather encourages them and builds them up.
- A family structure that helps children to advance in wisdom and age and in favor before God and man.
- A father, a mother, and children, all reverential and supportive of one another in their various roles and duties.

This is God's basic teaching on family and marriage. It is the basic structure for the family as God sets it forth: a man who loves his wife and a woman who loves her husband. In this stable, lasting, and faithful union of mutual support and love, they conceive and raise their children in the holy fear of the Lord.

Add to this, the principal description of the book of Genesis, which lays out how God sets forth marriage: *A man shall leave his father and mother, cling to his wife, and the two of them shall become one flesh* (Gen 2:24). To this first couple, God gave the mandate, *Be fruitful and multiply* (Gen 1:22).

Note, that the structure of the family takes its basic form based on its essential work: procreation and the raising of children. Why should marriage be a stable and lasting union? Because that is what is best and just for children! Children both need and deserve a stable, lasting union

of their father and mother as well as the complementary influence of the two different sexes. It is the best environment in which to raise and form children. The family structure of a father and a mother, a male and a female parent, as set forth by God, flows from what is best and just for children. It is what is sensible and what is best sociologically and psychologically for the proper development of children. God's biblical mandate that marriage should consist of a father and a mother is not without basis in human reason and common sense.

The struggles that family face today: Sin clouds judgment and makes many think that what is sinful and improper is in fact acceptable or even good. It is not. In our current culture we gravely sin against God and against our children through repeated misconduct and by our refusal to accept what is obviously true. The words of St. Paul are fulfilled in our modern times: *their senseless minds were darkened, and they became vain and foolish in their reasoning* (Rom 1:21).

It is clear that marriage and the family are in crisis today. It is also clear that it is children who suffer the most. The modern Western world displays a mentality that is both deeply imperfect and gravely harmful to children. The crisis is a result of the willful, sinful habits of many adults in the areas of sexuality, marriage, and family life. The rebellion of adults against the plan and order of God has caused endless grief and hardship

and has led to a cultural environment that is poisonous to the proper raising and blessing of children.

Children have much to suffer in this world of our collective making. While not all of us are equally guilty of contributing to their suffering, none of us is wholly innocent either, if for no other reason than by our silence.

The Strategies – What are we to do in this present crisis? How we “Preach the Word” in this problematic time? In order keep up God’s plan we need to apply these strategies:

- No sex before marriage, ever, under any circumstances. Sexual intercourse is rooted in the procreation of children and there is no legitimate use of it outside of marriage, ever. There are no exceptions.
- Children deserve and have the right to expect two parents, a father and a mother, committed to each other till death do them part. Anything short of this is a grave injustice to children and a mortal sin before God.
- Single mothers and fathers are *not* an acceptable alternative to biblical marriage. To intentionally subject children to this, for the sake of political correctness or for the perceived needs of adults, does them a grave injustice.

- Married couples must learn to work out their differences (as was done in the past) and not head for divorce court, something that offends God (cf Malachi 2:16).
- The needs of children far outweigh the preferences and needs of adults.
- Marriage is about what is best for children, not adults.

Regardless of the personal failings of any of us in this present evil age (cf Gal 1:4), our strategy must be to preach the undiluted plan of God for sexuality, marriage, and family to our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Even if many of us have fallen short, we must not hesitate to announce God's plan.

In short, back to the Bible! Back to the plan of God! Away with modern experiments and unbiblical schemes! God has given us a plan. Thinking that we had better ideas, we have caused great sorrow and hardship for our descendants. We have acted unjustly. We have murdered our children through abortion. Through our selfish misbehavior, we have sown the wind and now our descendants have inherited the whirlwind. It is time to repent. We must help our progeny to rejoice in chastity, marriage, and the biblical family.

God has a plan. Our strategy to address this crisis of our times must be to get back to God's structure for our families. This is how we celebrate the feast of Holy Family in a meaningful way.