

Today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family: the Feast of JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH. We do know why they are called holy. It's because they truly listened to their call, and they respected God's wishes and they submitted themselves to His will. They also honored each other, and they comforted one another, and above all, they cared for each other and protected each other from harm.

In today's Gospel, Mary and Joseph present Jesus in Jerusalem's Temple in fulfillment of their religious tradition. I'm sure we all remember when our own children, or our brothers or sisters were infants. We couldn't wait to show them off to family and friends. You probably had a big celebration on that special day when you went to church and presented them to the Lord to be received in Baptism. They left the church on that day of their baptism still our children — but also the Lord's. Mary and Joseph must have loved showing Jesus off just as we loved showing off our babies. They must have enjoyed the fuss that people made about Jesus, just as we enjoyed people stopping by to see our babies and say a kind word or two.

When we first held our children, when we brought the baby home from the hospital, when we survived that first night when our baby would not get to sleep, we probably asked yourself, how will we deal with the challenges this new life is going to bring? Perhaps we are still asking ourselves that question. Certainly there is not a parent here who has not wondered: how can I be the best parent possible? What will happen to my child during his or her life? What sort of person will he or she become?

Today the Church asks us to look to the Holy Family. They kept their union with God as the glue of their lives. This resulted in allowing them meet each and every challenge they faced. As we know, many of our families experience some kind of struggle, too. And it usually because we are doing everything BUT following God's wishes. Instead, we are too busy doing our own thing, following our own whims, and not understanding what's good for our whole family. As a result, all of us have known moments when the closest ones in our own families have deeply hurt us or disappointed us. We struggle to forgive each other, and we grow impatient with each other.

But the Holy Family can be our model. The Holy Family built everything they had on faith, hope and love of God. They loved and respected each other, shared their hopes and dreams and were totally faithful to each other and to God. This means we also need to love and respect each other, and be open to all members of our family, even those who have hurt us.

Family love demands that we open ourselves to each other, and to give ourselves as a gift to each other and God. We are all asked to place ourselves in the hands of God and to do His will. We should never lose heart. We need to understand what He wants of us, and then we need to follow that direction.

Also, a Christian family can consist of more than just a father, mother, and children. It can be a group of several different families who share their lives experiences together with all the people who belong to it. Therefore, we as a parish are a family. God is our father, Mary our spiritual mother, and each of us are the children. We joined this family when we were baptized as part of the Catholic family.

So let us pray this week for all of our families; for our individual families, for our extended families, and also for our parish family. We ask that we as members of each of these families to be able to emulate the Holy Family.

Like JESUS, MARY and JOSEPH, we ask to respond to whatever happens to us with patience and kindness, and with forgiveness and love. Like the Holy Family, help us to honor and respect each other, to comfort each other, and above all else, to always care for and protect each other from harm.

God Bless you all. The entire parish staff wants to wish you all a wonderful and prosperous New Year.