

Feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (B)

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I am going to say a word and I invite you to think about the word. What does it mean to you? What thoughts come to mind when you hear it? The word is **“FAMILY”** ... what does “family” mean to you? What thoughts come to mind when you hear the word? For some of us, we hear the word family, and we are transported to great memories, we remember joyful moments, or we think about our current situation. For some the word family brings negative feelings, discord, concerns and even pain. For some of us, we know exactly how to define our family, it might be our parents, grandparents, children and/or other relatives. For some we can't define the word, we don't know what a family is, we have heard of families, we might see families, but we might not have a firsthand experience of a family.

If you do a quick google search or look in a dictionary, you will certainly find a definition of a family, it will tell you that a family is a group of people who are related. This relation can be by blood, marriage, adoption, can include extended and even blended groups/families. Families are described at times as the building block of society. But is that all that defines a family for you? Is that what you thought of when the word family was mentioned?

The church agrees that the family is the building block of society, without a family structure, there is no society, but it goes a little further and describes a family as a domestic church. The phrase domestic church, although it seems recent, has been used since the Father's of The Church, but it has been revived since Vatican II, the term means “little church”. Therefore, more than just a group of people who are related, the church sees a family as a small church, which begs the question, **why a church?** A church has three main functions, it is called to sanctify, to glorify and to evangelize; **to sanctify** is to make holy, to consecrate, to help others reach sainthood. **To glorify** is to worship, to give glory and honor to God the Almighty and **to evangelize** is to share the good news, be Christ to others and to help others encounter God. That is why the family is called the domestic church, the little church, because the family has the same tasks or functions, it is to help sanctify its members, it is to help give glory to God and it is to help people encounter God. Vatican II document Lumen Gentium describes the family as the domestic church because it is the first place where baptized Christians learn about their faith, and states that the domestic church has a particular role and responsibility in leading souls to heaven. **Has that been your experience with Family?**

The presentation of Jesus in the temple could be an example of how to be a domestic church. Simeon was in the temple and had been told that he would not die until he saw the Messiah... Then Jesus is brought to the temple... **What did Simeon do?** He glorified God and then he blessed or sanctified the Holy Family. Then Anna is described as worshiping day and night, she was always glorifying God. When she saw baby Jesus, she thanked God (glorified God) and she “spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem” ... She evangelized. **Simeon and Anna represented what a church is called to do, they sanctified by blessing the holy family, they glorified by blessing and thanking God and they evangelized by their actions and by sharing the message.** You and I are being called to do the same in our domestic church, we might not be able to worship in a temple, day, and night like Anna, or be consecrated to a monastery, but in our family, in our household we are called to be a blessing, we are called to be a church.

What if my family has no resemblance to a family, nevertheless a domestic church? As dysfunctional as our family might be, somehow, it is our family. You might look around and say, I wish I was in the Smith family or the Rios family or the Turner family, I wish I was in the **(Lara family)** ... The fact is that everyone of our families has dysfunction, even Jesus’s family, if you look at his family tree, you will find some characters that will make you wonder why Jesus chose to be in their family. The truth is that neither you nor I chose our families, we might have some decisions over what families we marry into, but we have no say over what family we were born into. If God permitted for you to be born into a particular family, there is a reason for it, we might not know it until the end but there is a reason.

In the meantime, let us be a blessing to those around us, let us be a true family, let us be a domestic church. St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians gives us a guide to becoming a blessing, it **tells us to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, to forgive, to be thankful and most importantly to love.** This week I challenge you to contact a family member, call them, text them or send them a letter and thank them, thank them because one way or another God has chosen them to be a part of your family and one day you will find out why.

If you feel that you were shortchanged with the family that you were born into, if you feel that you never got to experience a family, if you feel that you didn’t receive a blessing through your family. Maybe YOU are being called to be the blessing, maybe God is going to bless your family through you, maybe you are being called to be the instrument for God’s sanctification, glorification, and evangelization within your

family. If you feel lonely and that you do not have a family, welcome to ours, our Lord gave his life, so that you can be a part of it. Holy Family of Jesus... Pray for US...