

## Homily - Feast of the Holy Family 2009

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. We normally hear about the respective first families of different countries in the world. Here in America, we presently have the Obama family. However, today's celebration is not about a country's first family; it is about the world's First Family for all time, the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. God gave this family as a model for all earthly families. By this family of Nazareth, God sealed the deal about the nature and constitution of the human family in accordance to His Will.

Why is this Family called "Holy"? What does holiness consist of and how can we make our respective families become truly holy families? Beloved, holiness is principally an attribute of God. God is not just holy; He is Holiness Himself because He is "infinite in all perfections". Holiness, in the classical sense means, "to be set apart". Simply put, it is to be different (in a positive way). God is holy because God is completely other than we are. He is God and we are not "God". So, to be holy we must be different; Christ says, "You are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world..." (John 15:19). Today, we have an identity crisis; that is why many don't know where to stand on many fundamental issues of faith and morals. I often hear some people say, "Because I'm a Christian does not mean I'm different from other Americans". Please, you are different. You are an American Christian, not an American Buddhist or Muslim. St. Peter says, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1Pet 2:9).

Each member of the Holy Family was consecrated and "set apart for God"; each of them existed only as instruments for God's divine purpose. They were uniquely different from other people in their roles. While Jesus' unique mission was to save the human race, Mary's was to be the Mother of God's Son and Joseph had the unique vocation to be the Foster Father of Jesus. All yielded to God's will. This is what holiness is – total consecration. God also has a purpose for you and me; he has set us apart for himself. Are we willing to be instruments of God to the world as the members of the Holy Family did? We must put aside our personal agenda, cherish our covenantal relationship with God and live for Him alone.

The Holy Family lived for God alone. Some people do not comprehend this; hence, they deny the truth about Mary and Joseph giving up a conjugal relationship in total consecration to God. For instance, some have a hard time accepting the divinely revealed teaching of the Church that Mary has no other children. For them, Joseph must have

had some level of conjugal relationship with Mary and produced other children. The problem is that some people cannot possibly get over Epicurean (pleasure seeking) mindset. They find it very difficult to understand how Mary and Joseph could have practiced total self consecration in a married state. Please, if you were Joseph, knowing that Jesus is God, would you use the "gate of God" into the world for conjugal pleasures? Perhaps, it is high time more research on the New Testament fulfillment of the following Old Testament prophesy should be done: "This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut" (Ezek 44:2).

See how our First Reading [1Sm 1:20-22, 24-28](#) (*Option 2*) shows how one can opt for higher spiritual values, not worldly cravings. Hannah was barren and she prayed to God for the gift of a child. In the end, she told her husband, Elkanah, that the child would be offered to God. She even made a ritual thanksgiving offering to God. She "brought [Samuel]... along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and presented him at the temple of the LORD". She said to the priest, "I prayed for this child, and the LORD granted my request. Now I, in turn, give him to the LORD... he shall be dedicated to the LORD." What a lesson for young parents to encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life!

Our Gospel passage ([Lk 2:41-52](#)) shows the need for responsible spiritual commitment and responsible child upbringing. The Holy Family's spirituality was not merely social or ceremonial; it was a dedicated commitment. Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover and Jesus (their child) always went with them. What a lesson for parents who do not bring their little children to the Church! Scripture says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). Eventually, when Jesus was missing, "three days [later] they found him in the temple... [and he said to them] 'Why were you looking for me [everywhere]? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'". Jesus is showing us that introducing our children early enough to God will make them fall in love with God. They will always be found in God's house, in good company and not in questionable places.

May the Good Lord sanctify us with all the blessings he bestowed on the Holy Family that we might grow and attain the full potential God has willed for us. May we become truly holy families and lights of the world, through Christ our Lord. Amen.