

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Perhaps you are familiar with the old saying about family life? “Family: Can’t live with them. Can’t live without them.” Today’s celebration of “The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph” gives us an opportunity to reflect on family. The three scripture readings give us three different perspectives on family: promise, faith and legacy.

In the first reading from the Old Testament Book of Genesis we hear about a promise made by God to Abraham. When God initially asked Abraham to move his family from their ancestral land of Ur to a new land that he had chosen for them he promised Abraham and Sarah a child for they were childless. The reading today picks up the story after the move to the new land. Despite the move the couple is still childless. Abraham complains to God about this... God hears his complaint... Sarah becomes pregnant and their son Isaac is born even though Sarah is way past childbearing age.

This promise that God made with Abraham is known as a covenant. It required a commitment on the part of both of them. When a Christian couple gets married and forms a family their commitment is also known as a covenant. Their covenant which “by nature is permanent and indissoluble is ordered to the good the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring. “

A challenge for the Church today is that a growing number of Christian couples are getting married outside of the Church or not getting married at all. The promise of covenant marriage is not a part of their lives.

The second reading focuses on the role of faith in family life. The writer of Hebrews uses Abraham as a model of faith. Abraham demonstrated faith when he left his homeland for

the promise land. He demonstrated faith when he trusted that his wife Sarah's sterility would not prevent her from conceiving a child. Abraham demonstrated faith when God put him to the test of sacrificing his son Isaac even though Isaac was the son of the promise.

The main way that faith is passed on from one generation to the next is through family life. Most of us are here today because one or both of our parents were faith-filled people. For this reason the Second Vatican Council called the family "The Domestic Church." This parish exists to support families and individuals in their lives of faith. As a parish we gather on a regular basis for community prayer while you pray at home as a family; the parish runs and supports education programs while your children learn from you by word and example; the parish provides sharing opportunities both local and worldwide while you both give and receive within your family; the parish bears witness to the Catholic faith by its presence in the metro area while your family witnesses through your lifestyle. The challenge for the Church today is that if fewer parents are getting married in the Church then there will be fewer children who are baptized and raised in the Catholic faith. One way that we as a parish are trying to meet this challenge is through a new experience called "Alpha." It is designed to explore the Christian faith on a level that many haven't experienced. The next session begins in two weeks. Stop by the "Alpha" table after mass for more information.

St. Luke in the gospel reading presents us with a story about the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We are told that after the purification of Mary and Jesus in the temple that the three of them returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. There Jesus "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him."

One way of understanding Jesus is that he is the legacy of Mary and Joseph. Your children are your legacy as well. We would have to say that Mary and Joseph did a good job in raising Jesus. That is also your challenge as parents, or if you aren't a parent, then it is your challenge as a mentor or a godparent. The young are our future... they are our legacy. Do we take our responsibility seriously?

Family: Can't live with them. Can't live without them. However you define family, what kind of family person are you?