

“Each year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom.” Words from our Gospel today, from the 2nd chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

Our families have a lot of struggles today. Not everyone practices the faith anymore. Someone is seriously ill. Making ends meet and facing external pressures from culture and society is difficult. Family disputes over possessions and with in-laws give rise to much tension and stress. No family is perfect, we know this, but every family can be holy (2x). Just as God worked through the daily struggles of the family unit of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, so too is God present in our families making them to be holy. Some time ago, Pope Francis was asked, “What is it that makes a family holy?” Instead of listening to me go on and on today, on this feast of the Holy Family, I thought it would be good to hear his pastoral response and listen to what the Holy Father himself had to say:

“Pope Francis on the Family — What Makes a Family Holy?”¹

1. First: *the family prays*.

...I would like to ask you, dear families: Do you pray together from time to time as a family? Some of you do, I know. But so many people say to me: But how can we? ...But in the family how is this done? After all, prayer seems to be something personal, and besides there is never a good time, a moment of peace... Yes, all that is true enough, but it is also a matter of humility, of realizing that we need God... all of us! We need his help, his strength, his blessing, his mercy, his forgiveness. And we need simplicity to pray as a family: simplicity is necessary! Praying the Our Father together, around the table, is not something extraordinary: it’s easy. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength! And also praying for one another! The husband for his wife, the wife for her husband, both together for their children, the children for their grandparents... praying for each other. This is what it means to pray in the family and it is what makes the family strong: prayer.

¹ Pope Francis, HOLY MASS FOR THE FAMILY DAY, HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS, Saint Peter's Square, Sunday, 27 October 2013, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20131027_omelia-pellegrinaggio-famiglia.html.

2. Next, *the family keeps the faith.*

Here too, we can ask: How do we keep our faith as a family? Do we keep it for ourselves, in our families, as a personal treasure like a bank account, or are we able to share it by our witness, by our acceptance of others, by our openness? We all know that families, especially young families, are often “racing” from one place to another, with lots to do. But did you ever think that this “racing” could also be the race of faith? Christian families are missionary families.

...They are missionary in everyday life, in their doing everyday things, as they bring to everything the salt and the leaven of faith! [In this way, families not only keep the faith but also share it with others...]

3. And finally: *the family experiences joy.*

I would like to ask you all a question today, but each of you keep it in your heart and take it home. You can regard it as a kind of “homework.” Only you must answer: How are things when it comes to joy at home? Is there joy in your family? You can answer this question. Dear families, you know very well that the true joy which we experience in the family is not superficial; it does not come from material objects, from the fact that everything seems to be going well... True joy comes from a profound harmony between persons, something which we all feel in our hearts and which makes us experience the beauty of togetherness, of mutual support along life’s journey. But the basis of this feeling of deep joy is the presence of God, the presence of God in the family and his love, which is welcoming, merciful, and respectful towards all. And above all, a love which is patient: patience is a virtue of God and he teaches us how to cultivate it in family life, how to be patient, and lovingly so, with each other. To be patient among ourselves. A patient love. God alone knows how to create harmony from differences. But if God’s love is lacking, the family loses its harmony, self-centeredness prevails, and joy fades. But the family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is the leaven of society as a whole.

Dear families, always live in faith and simplicity, like the Holy Family of Nazareth! The joy and peace of the Lord be always with you!

Readings: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/123018.cfm>

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Lectionary: 17

Reading 1 [1SM 1:20-22, 24-28](#)

In those days Hannah conceived, and at the end of her term bore a son whom she called Samuel, since she had asked the LORD for him.

The next time her husband Elkanah was going up with the rest of his household

to offer the customary sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vows, Hannah did not go, explaining to her husband,

“Once the child is weaned,

I will take him to appear before the LORD

and to remain there forever;

I will offer him as a perpetual nazirite.”

Once Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him up with her,

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 in Shiloh.

After the boy’s father had sacrificed the young bull,

Hannah, his mother, approached Eli and said:

“Pardon, my lord!

As you live, my lord,

I am the woman who stood near you here, praying to the LORD.

I prayed for this child, and the LORD granted my request.

Now I, in turn, give him to the LORD;

as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the LORD.”

Hannah left Samuel there.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10.](#)

R. (cf. 5a) **Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the LORD.

My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

R. **Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**

Happy they who dwell in your house!

Continually they praise you.

Happy the men whose strength you are!

Their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage.

R. **Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**

O LORD of hosts, hear our prayer;

hearken, O God of Jacob!

O God, behold our shield,

and look upon the face of your anointed.

R. **Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**

Reading 2 [COL 3:12-17](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved,

heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,

bearing with one another and forgiving one another,
if one has a grievance against another;
as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.
And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one body.
And be thankful.
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another,
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
with gratitude in your hearts to God.
And whatever you do, in word or in deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel [LK 2:41-52](#)

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover,
and when he was twelve years old,
they went up according to festival custom.
After they had completed its days, as they were returning,
the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem,
but his parents did not know it.
Thinking that he was in the caravan,
they journeyed for a day
and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances,
but not finding him,
they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.
After three days they found him in the temple,
sitting in the midst of the teachers,
listening to them and asking them questions,
and all who heard him were astounded
at his understanding and his answers.
When his parents saw him,
they were astonished,
and his mother said to him,
"Son, why have you done this to us?
Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."
And he said to them,
"Why were you looking for me?
Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"
But they did not understand what he said to them.
He went down with them and came to Nazareth,
and was obedient to them;
and his mother kept all these things in her heart.
And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor
before God and man.