

Feast of the Holy Family December 27, 2009

*“He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them
....”*
-- Luke 2:51

The fortunes of Jesus, Mary and Joseph have been continually revealed to us since the first moments of the annunciation. In telling Mary she was to be the mother of the savior of the world, the archangel Gabriel heralded the beginning of a new family, a unique and holy family. In specific ways, God worked through the lives of Mary and Joseph to prepare them to receive Christ and make a home life together. With tremendous faith and generosity, they accepted God’s Word and established a safe and loving household where Jesus could grow in God’s favor.

In one sense, Jesus, Mary and Joseph formed a family unit unlike any other in history. In another sense, they shared the ups and downs of domestic living just as we do. In today’s Gospel, Luke tells the story of the Holy Family searching for Jesus, age 12, who remained behind in the temple with its teachers. We easily relate to Mary and Joseph’s concern for their young son. Some view Christ’s response to their concern as a rebuke (how often have our 12 year olds made similar statements ...), but Christ is simply emphasizing his role on earth. What follows is Luke’s statement that would joyous to any parent of a teen “... and was obedient to them.”

Until Christ begins his public ministry, we have no additional insight into the intervening twenty years of his life. Nonetheless, Joseph and Mary witnessed Christ maturing in wisdom and in the favor of his heavenly Father. They are a holy family because of the faith and holiness with which Mary and Joseph undertook the mission God gave them. Through patience, self-sacrifice, and big-heartedness, united with prayer and observance of the commandments, Mary and Joseph

sanctified their home life at Nazareth and created a place where love took first place. In this they are a profound inspiration.

As the saying goes, you can choose your friends, but not your family. Whatever family means to us – whether it be our relatives, people we live with, the Church or a human community, however big or small – we are called to bring to all our relationships the values and virtues shown to us by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. May we ask that the Holy Family provide its graces to us as we struggle as family.

Readings:

1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

<http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel1.htm#v20>

Psalm 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10

<http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/psalms/psalm84.htm>

1 John 3:1-2, 21-24 <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1john/1john3.htm>

Luke 2:41-52 <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke2.htm#v41>