

Christmas is a family time. That is why despite the warning by health officials not to travel a Christmas people continued to travel. Only to be with the family. One woman told during some interview that she has not seen her two grand kids for two years so, she was determined to go and visit the, no matter what. During this family time, families reunite once again to spend much time together, to enjoy each other's company, to relax together, to have special family meals together. Even in India, people travel long distance by trains or bus taking two three days to be with the family at Christmas. But this year due to pandemic many families have to forgo this family time. But, the church has not forgotten like other years to remind us about the importance of family in human life.

Hence, this Sunday, The Holy Family of Nazareth, Jesus, Mary and Joseph is presented to us as a model for our families.

We call it "*The Holy Family*" but that does not mean that it did not have problems. Just as every family has to face problems and overcome them, or to put it another way, has to carry a cross, so also The Holy Family had to carry crosses.

Today's Gospel describes how the Holy Family spends time together. How Joseph invests his time in the family as he presents Mary and the Child Jesus in the Temple for the ritual of the mother's purification and the child's "presentation."

Today's Gospel gives a hint of the crosses the Holy Family will have to carry. During the presentation in the temple, we heard after blessing Jesus Simeon said to Mary "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted —and you yourself a sword will pierce."

From the very start this family had to face problems. Let's try to recall some of them:-

- Misunderstanding between Joseph and Mary when Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Difficulties in finding a place for safe delivery in Bethlehem
- Fleeing to Egypt in order to save baby Jesus from the wrath of Herod.
- Loosing Jesus in the temple.
- Saddest moment of all came when Mary saw Jesus dying an agonizing death and felt helpless.

Compared to the sufferings and crosses this Holy family had to carry, perhaps our suffering or crosses are nothing. Still, we keep complaining

What kept The Holy Family together throughout all of these trials and crosses? The answer is 'Love for each other and God'.

I believe that the greatest threat facing families today is simply that we don't spend enough time together. We don't have time for each other. We are so busy working, or socializing, or watching TV that we have less and less time for each other. Modern technology has added an insult to injury in this regard. When, I visit hospitals, I feel very sorry to sick people lying alone in the hospital bed all alone. None of the family members are to be found around. Coming from a country where someone or other from family is always with the sick person in the hospital 24X7. I find it very strange. What a pity.

Just as the holy family survived all its crises through love for each other and faith in God, let us pray during this Mass that our families will conquer all difficulties through love for each other and faith in God.

The feast of the Holy Family reminds us to extend the boundaries of our family: go beyond the bond of blood and go to include the bond of love and faith. The homeless man or woman today in the streets of big cities, fighting the cold and the snow, is part of our family. The sick person, dying, alone, dirty and maybe even obnoxious, is a member of our family. The person sitting in the prison cell for whatever reason is also a child of God, and as such, is a member of our family.

At St. Ann we get many such chances to extend your family boundaries. One such chance is in our bulletin.