

Holy Family 2020 “The Gift of Hope”

Fr. Frank Schuster

The feast of the Holy Family comes at a good time each year. I pray that you are having a good Christmas. However, the truth is many of us have had a challenging one due to the need to be socially distant during the pandemic. However, this year may have been difficult for you for other reasons like the loss of a loved one or perhaps struggling with an illness, relationships or finances, the list goes on. Like Mary, we know that life can sometimes come at us like a sword that pierces the heart. Whenever we have to muddle through a holiday that is supposed to be happy but ends up being difficult, it is consoling to know that the first Christmas wasn't easy either. Whatever we are going through right now in life...Jesus, Mary and Joseph get it, their first Christmas was rough too, so stay close to them.

Of course, what made the Holy Family “holy”? The obvious answer is Jesus. Jesus made the Holy family holy. This means our families can be holy too if we welcome Jesus into our home despite whatever hardship we might be facing right now. The Christmas story, indeed the whole Gospel, says one thing loud and clear, having Jesus in your life doesn't always make life easier. Part of being Christian is to have a cross to carry, and sometimes they are quite heavy. With Jesus however, despite the cross we carry, life is always more hopeful, because we know in our hearts that we do not carry our crosses alone. We know that our journey through life does not end with emptiness but rather eternal joy. This hope in the future has a way of shaping our outlook on the present and gives us a roadmap through even our most difficult hour.

We are therefore invited this weekend to remember what a holy family looks like. For St. Paul, in our second reading, it looks like a family that is kind, humble, compassionate, gentle, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. Notice that Paul doesn't say that a holy family looks peaceful all the time. Families without frustrations do not exist. The Holy Family had their moments of frustration too. For St. Paul, holy families look like families that, despite the frustrations, nevertheless choose (that is the operating word here, “choose”) to be kind, humble, compassionate, gentle, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, over and over and over again! It looks like husbands, wives and children caring for each other more than they care about themselves. I think the Gospel demonstrates a Holy Family wonderfully, a family that trusts in God despite the dangers they face in life.

My friends, the good news is we know our journey doesn't end with the cross. Because of Jesus, our journey's destination will be eternal life with God. And so, we can ask ourselves: what is one thing I can do today to help my family become a holier family? What are some of the decisions I need to make in my life that will bless my family as we make our journey through life? What is that one little thing that I can do today to welcome Jesus more deeply into my heart and to my home? If we do this, this feast day of the Holy Family may offer us the best gift we could ever ask for this Christmas season. This feast day offers us the gift of hope.