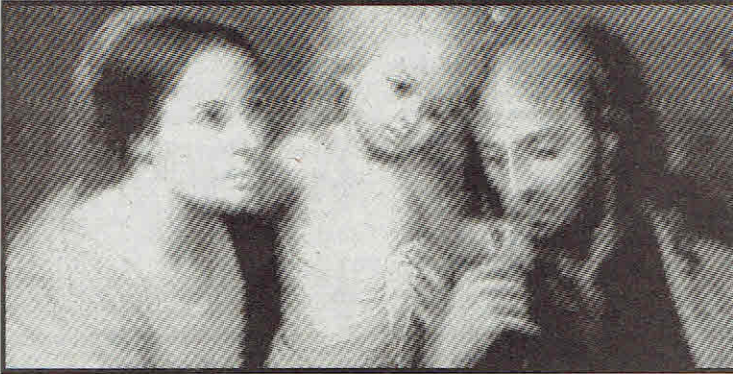




The Shining Example of the Holy Family



In the context of Christmas, the liturgy of the Church celebrates the feast of the Holy Family. Jesus' incarnation is more than just assuming a human body. He takes our human condition in its entirety, and being raised in a family is one of the dimensions of the mystery of the fullness of God's revelation in history. On the other hand, this celebration challenges us to live the spiritual and missionary dimensions of every family. The Collect or Opening Prayer at Mass points to the "shining example of the Holy Family" that is for us to imitate.

Today's Gospel shows two different views on how we must understand the mystery of salvation revealed in Jesus' becoming a human being. First, the family becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Simeon and Anna

are able to perceive the full accomplishment of God's plan due to the work of the Holy Spirit; they are led to the Temple by the Holy Spirit. Inspired by the Spirit, they prophesy about the Child which makes Mary and Joseph wonder at what is being said about him. The essence of every family, whether shaped by bonds of blood or by bonds of vicinity and affinity, is its being marked by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit's presence allows the peace of Christ to reign in our hearts. Even when we and our families are threatened by all kinds of danger and temptation, the family remains strong, as it carries out Paul's advice: "Put on, then, 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" (Col 3:12-13).

Secondly, we are also invited to the same amazement of Mary and Joseph regarding their child; we are invited to realize how each member of a family is God's gift. A gift is a hidden grace, or at least a reality not totally and immediately revealed. It is a fruit of love and has the purpose of generating amazement that leads to deeper love. As a fruit of love, each member of the family is accorded respect and honor, which not only strengthens the family bond but also fortifies their participation in a greater family, that is, the community. It is not without basis, therefore, that the community expresses its concern for families under threat of breakup or poverty.

The family faces different challenges at diverse times, places, cultures, and circumstances. Yet despite diverse configurations, Christian families must look into the "shining example of the Holy Family" in its essence: a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit where each one understands the other as God's gift.

— Fr. João Marques Eleutério

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon [Lk 2:16]
(Recited when there is no entrance song)

The shepherds went in haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here)

P — The Lord be with you
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction

(The priest may address the assembly using these or other similar words)

P — As we contemplate the Incarnation of the Son of God, we praise God who created the family of humankind and who, in the fullness of time, sent his Son to be a part of our family. Christmas is a celebration of the family. May today's feast of the Holy Family of Jesus and Mary and Joseph teach us to value family life and to live in peace with one another as members of the one family of God.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.
(Pause)

All — I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, *(strike your breast)* through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask Blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.

P — Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

P — Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy.

P — Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

All — Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P — Let us pray. *(Pause)*

O God, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading [Sir 3:2-6, 12-14]
(Sit)

God wills that we live lives pleasing to him. The wise man teaches that a good life means having a family where members love and respect each other.

A reading from the Book of Sirach

GOD SETS a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and preserves himself from them. When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard.

Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.

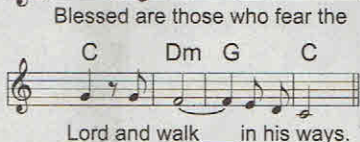
My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; revile him not all the days of his life; kindness to a father will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt of your sins—a house raised in justice to you.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 128)

R — Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

E. C. Marfori



1. Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored. (R)

2. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; your children like olive plants around your table. (R)

3. Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD. The LORD bless you from Zion: may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. (R)

Second Reading (Col 3:12-21)

As members of Christ's body, we form one family, with him as our head. The apostle Paul tells us how we should defer to one another.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians

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. Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.

— The word of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia [Col 3:15a, 16a] (*Stand*)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. Let the peace of Christ control your hearts; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Lk 2:22-40)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

All — Glory to you, O Lord.

WHEN THE DAYS were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, *Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord*, and to offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came

in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "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—so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.

She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

— The Gospel of the Lord.

All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (*Sit*)

Profession of Faith (*Stand*)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(*at the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow*)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — Let us pray to the Father that the Holy Family, the perfect model of every human family, may help each family to grow in understanding of its mission in the Church and in society. With confidence, we pray:

R — Listen to the prayer of your family, O Lord.

C — May the Church, like the family of Nazareth, be an example of unity, faithfulness, and love especially in places where families suffer internal crises. We pray: (**R**)

C — May government and civil leaders be mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family and its role in God's plan. We pray: (**R**)

C — May husbands and wives remain faithful to their covenant of love in marriage and find their fulfillment through the sincere gift of one's self. We pray: (**R**)

C — May children honor their father and their mother and give joy to them through love and obedience; may parents bring up their children to live in truth, love, and self-giving. We pray: (**R**)

C — May families stricken by poverty, separation, and animosity be strengthened by the solidarity and support of generous persons. We pray: (**R**)

P — Father, hear our prayers and supplications. May we live our days in humble service to you through our concern for the good of the family.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



Presentation of the Gifts

(Stand)

P — Pray, brethren...

All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — We offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of conciliation, humbly asking that, through the intercession of the Virgin Mother of God and Saint Joseph, you may establish our families firmly in your grace and your peace.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

Preface II of the Nativity of the Lord

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

P — Lift up your hearts.

All — We lift them up to the Lord.

P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All — It is right and just.

P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For on the feast of this awe-filled mystery, though invisible in his own divine nature, he has appeared visibly in ours; and begotten before all ages, he has begun to exist in time; so that, raising up in himself all that was cast down, he might restore unity to all creation and call straying humanity back to the heavenly Kingdom.

And so, with all the Angels, we praise you, as in joyful celebration, we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy...
(Kneel)

Acclamation *(Stand)*



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All — We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All — Our Father...

P — Deliver us, Lord...

All — For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion *(Kneel)*

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon *(Bar 3:38)*

Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

Prayer after Communion *(Stand)*

P — Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Bring those you refresh with this heavenly Sacrament, most merciful Father, to imitate

constantly the example of the Holy Family, so that, after the trials of this world, we may share their company for ever.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P — Bow for the blessing. *(Pause)*

Lord God, from the abundance of your mercies provide for your servants and ensure their safety, so that, strengthened by your blessings, they may at all times abound in thanksgiving and bless you with unending exultation.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

All — Thanks be to God.