

REFLECTION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born among us, who took on our human condition, did so by integrating himself into a family, with its traditions, its religion, and its history. He took Joseph and Mary as his parents, and with them he grew up and learned the lessons of life. This Sunday, still in the context of celebrating the Christmas of our Lord, the liturgy invites us to look at this Holy Family, proposing that we see it as an example and model for our family communities.

The readings highlight the importance of the family as the place where we grow and learn the fundamental values of our lives: peace, justice, charity, respect, and love for one another. In the Bible, the family has a very special place, so much so that on many occasions God's relationship with his people is seen as a spousal relationship, making the love between spouses the paradigm of the love between God and his people. However, let us analyze this reality from the readings that the Church has chosen for us to listen to and meditate on this day.

The first reading, taken from the book of Sirach, presents in a very practical way, some attitudes that children should have towards their parents. The author of this text says: *"Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is the one who lays up treasure. ... son, support your father in his old age and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if he lacks understanding show indulgence; in all your strength do not despise him."* These are words that children should continue to hear. Let us honor our parents, support them in their old age, respect them, love them with a tender and welcoming love. In this way, we will be thanking our parents for what they did for us and teaching our children to respect and love their elders. The reading tells us that these attitudes are dear to God.

In turn, the second reading, taken from the Letter to the Colossians, begins by calling on all of us to be holy, clothing ourselves with feelings of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; forgiving one another and being supportive of one another and, above all, that we clothe ourselves with charity.

These virtues must be part of our concrete life, which is why St. Paul presents the family as one of the first places where these values must be learned, hence he asks that wives be respectful to their husbands and that husbands love their wives. That children obey their parents and that parents do not frustrate their children. Basically, it is about living the ideals of the Gospel of Jesus in the family since the family is the first school of life. May our families be places of tenderness and peace, of fraternity and compassion, of love, as Jesus Christ asks of us.

In the Gospel, we read the episode of Jesus' loss when he was 12 years old in Jerusalem. It is an interesting episode, which shows us first that Jesus Christ was completely integrated into our human reality; he was part of a family, with its customs, its traditions, and its religion. He lived those traditions and customs. That is why we find him on his way to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate the Passover with them. However, the Gospel tells us that Jesus ended up not following Joseph and Mary back to Nazareth but stayed in Jerusalem. His worried parents must return to look for Jesus in the Holy City. They find him amid the teachers in the synagogue, sitting and asking them questions. *He is the Teacher* and so he sits with the disciples around him, whom he teaches, questions and challenges.

His mother asks him: *“Son, why have you treated us so? ...your father and I have been searching for you... [Jesus answered them:] “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”*

Jesus states here the fundamental principle that guides his existence: God is the beginning, the center, and the end of his whole life; he will always do everything to be with God, to listen to God, to obey God, to live on God's time and schedule. Children are not meant to fulfill their parents' plans, but God's plan and God's plan for Jesus was that he should give himself to God's will, that he should always be with him, that he should witness to him before men.

The Gospel ends by saying that *“[Jesus] went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And His mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.”* Joseph and Mary continued their mission as parents and Jesus as their son, in an atmosphere of harmony and tenderness, where God was present.

May the Holy Family of Nazareth be a model for our families, so that every family is a place of tenderness and peace, of forgiveness and affection, of love. May each family be a true school of Gospel values in the world. May God bless our families. Amen.