

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – B  
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Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
30/31 December 2017

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3  
Psalm 105  
Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19  
(Colossians 3:15a, 16a) Luke 2:22-40

### *The Holy Family Family*

A Baby Boy was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. At first, only his mother, father, and a few animals noticed.<sup>i</sup> That quickly changed. Shepherds came from the fields to visit this new family.<sup>ii</sup> Then – following their religious custom – His mother and father took Him to the Temple, where other people took notice.<sup>iii</sup> A holy man held this Baby in his arms and blessed God for what he saw in Him.<sup>iv</sup> A holy woman gave thanks to God for this Baby and told others about Him.<sup>v</sup> More and more people began to take notice: wise men from a distant land came “to do Him homage,” while King Herod and all of Jerusalem were troubled by this new Baby.<sup>vi</sup>

This Baby’s parents were amazed at all that was happening.<sup>vii</sup> They were also afraid of what this all was going to mean.<sup>viii</sup> They had to make big adjustments to their lives. They were forced to move to different lands.<sup>ix</sup> Things eventually did settle down for them, and they began their ordinary domestic life together as a family in Nazareth.<sup>x</sup>

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This Good News – that a Savior was born for us<sup>xi</sup> – shares many things in common with the birth of all babies.<sup>xii</sup> When a baby is born, things change. A new family is formed. An existing family takes a new shape. People take notice. Parents, family, and friends are amazed at the new life. Sometimes, they are even worried or afraid of what it will mean to take care of the new baby and the adjustments they will have to make to their own lives.

All of us here know some things about what it’s like to adjust to the changes that happen in families. When I was born and my family changed its shape, my parents had to adjust to

caring for two children. My sister had to adjust to no longer being the only child. When my parents brought me home from the hospital, she wouldn't even look at me for a few days. She did adjust, however, and quickly began learning how to care for me – as evidenced by a beloved photograph we have of her holding me and feeding me a bottle when I was only a few weeks old.

Adjusting to these kinds of changes are what families do; this is what families are for. The purpose of a family is to bring new life into our world; to care for that life and help him or her grow. Ultimately, the purpose of a family is that, through caring for one another, and *learning how* to care for one another, *everyone* in the family grows in holiness.<sup>xiii</sup>

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We all come from a family and we always remain part of a family throughout our lives.<sup>xiv</sup> Family life is common to all of us, yet each family “is particular, unique and unrepeatable, just as [each one of us] is unrepeatable.”<sup>xv</sup> Each family has some combination of joy and sorrow; good times and hard times. The particular experiences and circumstances that make up those joys, sorrows, good times, and bad times are unique to each family and each person.

Although the shape and look of our family changes over time, and whom we consider to be part of our family might change, we never stop being part of some kind of family. Marriages, breakups, births, deaths, changing jobs and moving homes – all of these life events change the shape of our family. Sometimes in joyful ways; sometimes in sorrowful ways. Whether joyful or sorrowful – they all have the opportunity to lead us to holiness – to teach us how to love – to teach us how to forgive – to teach us how to care for one another.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – in their life as the Holy Family – also experienced both joys and sorrows.<sup>xvi</sup> And just as Jesus Christ entered into our world as part of a family,<sup>xvii</sup> He – along with Mary and Joseph – remains a part of our world through our families when we gather

together in His name. We see this here at Holy Family Church whenever we come to celebrate our liturgies and sacraments.<sup>xviii</sup> When families take new shape in a wedding or a baptism here in this church: it is Jesus who joins the couple in matrimony<sup>xix</sup>; it is Jesus who baptizes the person<sup>xx</sup> – and He, Mary, and Joseph join us in our celebration. When a family mourns the loss of a loved one at a funeral here in this church: it is Jesus who promises everlasting life through His Resurrection<sup>xxi</sup> – and He, Mary, and Joseph comfort us in our sorrow. When we offer prayers for family members who are sick or going through a difficulty, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph hear our prayers and intercede for us to our Heavenly Father.

Here at Holy Family Parish, hundreds and hundreds of families of all shapes and sizes come to experience the love, mercy, forgiveness, and healing of God. We celebrate with one another in our joys; we comfort one another in our sorrows; we pray for one another; we care for one another and learn how to care for one another. Through these experiences, together, we grow in holiness and we make one family: the “Holy Family Family.” We are then called to share that same love, mercy, forgiveness, and healing – to bring the love of the Holy Family to whatever circumstances we find in our own families, friends, neighbors, and communities.

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As one of the newest members of Holy Family Parish, I thank you for welcoming me into the “Holy Family Family.” I thank you for adjusting to me, caring for me, and helping me to grow in holiness.

My prayer for 2018 is that together, as the “Holy Family Family,” we ask Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to pray for all of us; to protect our families; to teach us how to love and forgive like they do; to help our families experience God’s healing and peace; and to help all of us grow in holiness.

Happy and Holy New Year to you and your families!

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<sup>i</sup> Luke 2:7

<sup>ii</sup> Luke 2:16

<sup>iii</sup> Luke 2:22-24

<sup>iv</sup> Luke 2:25-35

<sup>v</sup> Luke 2:36-38

<sup>vi</sup> Matthew 2:1-3

<sup>vii</sup> Luke 2:18, 33

<sup>viii</sup> Luke 1:30; 2:10; Matthew 1:20; 2:13-15, 22

<sup>ix</sup> Luke 2:4-5, 22, 39; Matthew 2:13-15, 21-23

<sup>x</sup> Luke 2:39-40; Matthew 2:23; *Homiletic Directory* 120

<sup>xi</sup> Luke 2:10-11

<sup>xii</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 531, 533

<sup>xiii</sup> *CCC* 1656, 2204-2206

Pope Paul VI, *Nazareth, a Model* from his Pilgrimage to the Holy Land (5 January 1964):

“...we learn about family life. May Nazareth serve as a model of what the family should be. May it show us the family’s holy and enduring character and exemplify its basic function in society: a community of love and sharing, beautiful for the problems it poses and the rewards it brings, in sum, the perfect setting for rearing children – and for this there is no substitute.”

<sup>xiv</sup> *CCC* 1658; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981):

“No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone, especially those who ‘labor and are heavy laden.’”

<sup>xv</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to Families 2* (2 February 1994)

<sup>xvi</sup> Luke 2:18-19, 33-35, 48; Matthew 2:13-15, 21-23

<sup>xvii</sup> *CCC* 1655

<sup>xviii</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 33:

“For in the liturgy God speaks to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His gospel. [...] ...the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ... [...] And the visible signs used by the liturgy to signify invisible divine things have been chosen by Christ...”

<sup>xix</sup> *CCC* 1639-1642

<sup>xx</sup> *Rite of Baptism* explains: “God...has given you a new birth by water...” and “you have...clothed yourself in Christ.”

<sup>xxi</sup> *Prayer of Commendation* from *Order of Christian Funerals*: “...together with all who have died in Christ, he/she will rise with him on the last day.”