

Feast of the Holy Family
December 31, 2017

Behold this child is destined for the rise and fall of many

*Lord, help us make you known among the nations,
and to proclaim all your wondrous deeds*

The Holy Family

Biblical historian John P. Pilch says that in the ancient Mediterranean culture, women were considered untrustworthy. So to avoid suspicion that a boy wasn't his, the father would have the boy circumcised and name him as early as eight days, making a public declaration formally accepting this child as his son. Given the unusual circumstances of Jesus' conception and birth, one can only imagine what suspicions Joseph must have faced in his village.

We are celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family. We call them holy, and rightly so. But why do we call them holy? What made them holy? It wasn't because of any special treatment they received. They lived ordinary lives according to the times. They must have enjoyed great love and joy and also suffered great hardships. They started out being a homeless family having to go to Bethlehem because of the taxes they had to pay. They faced condemnation, were threatened by political leaders, were refugees, and were constantly being discredited by religious authorities.

They were faced with difficult situations they weren't prepared for, but they didn't complain, blame, fret, or lose heart. So what gave them heart, comfort and hope during these times? An enduring trust in God, and it changed the world. That same kind of enduring trust in God is being offered to us - right here, right now! Such trust will not only change ourselves, it will change the world - right here, right now!

This Feast of the Holy Family is about us

When we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family - we are not only celebrating what happened back then, we are celebrating what is happening now. The story of the Holy Family is our story. We are faced with difficult situations everyday too that we're not prepared for - in our country, our church, and in our world: poverty -- homelessness -- facing condemnation -- being threatened by political figures -- refugees -- families being torn apart -- being terrorized in the name of religion. And we know there more hardships people are facing around the world.

But complaining, blaming, fretting and bickering don't help, it only makes matters worse for everyone, especially ourselves. Losing heart removes us from living the life of the Holy Family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus. It is in our enduring trust in God that we are able to live out in our time the life of the Holy Family. And it not only changes ourselves, it changes the life of the world

I experienced that trust of the Holy Family - in my parents. They knew what it meant to be poor, but I never heard them complain about it. They simply faced their hardships with the faith of a holy family.

We are beginning a New Year

This is the traditional time for making new resolutions. It's a time we ask how we can deepen the faith of the Holy Family in ourselves.

It is also a time for a new kind of resolve that seeks to contribute to the global family what is based on human relationships, what is dedicated to the care of our planet, commitment to justice and equality, what seeks to raise hundreds of millions from poverty, violence, and oppression. We need to find new ways of finding answers to problems at a peaceful level and foundational level, with no need to oppose, deny or reject. There is a new sense of urgency of the Holy Spirit. With over seven billion humans on the planet, there is much to love and embrace.

How do we begin to do this? By embracing the simple and powerful faith of the Holy Family. This is our time. Let us take it and run with it as if our lives depended on it.

*Lord, this new year, help us make you known among the nations,
and to proclaim all your wondrous deeds - in a new way.*

Happy Feast Day, everyone

and Happy New Year!