

**Christmas is a family time.** And so we thank God for our families and for the grace and privilege to spend time together, to enjoy each other's company, to relax together, to have special meals and traditions. And so we ask God to bless our families and help our families continue to grow to become what they are called to be.

It is fitting that during this family time every year we reflect on The Holy Family of Nazareth, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We can think in terms of the events and graces that truly make Jesus, Mary and Joseph holy, i.e.:

- Mary was immaculately conceived and was sinless all her life and conceived Jesus of the Holy Spirit.
- Joseph was her chaste spouse.
- Jesus is the Son of God.

**So of course they are the Holy Family!**

Yet in our Gospel (Year C) we see a moment of tension in the family as Jesus is lost and found again in the Temple.

Mary “Son why have you do this to us? We have been looking for you with great anxiety.” The word in the Greek is much stronger than anxiety, the word is **“agony”** The same word found the Luke story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, there the Rich Man, says to Abraham, “send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to quench my thirst, for I am in agony.”

It is obvious that the Holy Family suffered and indeed bore the cross on many occasions.

As part of the agony of this event, **Mary not only does not get a satisfactory answer to her question**, Jesus confounds them with what he does say, **“Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”**

And then Luke goes on to write that Mary and Joseph did not know what he meant.

And **sometimes our families too do not understand why we have a particular cross to carry and like Mary we ask, “Why did you do this to us?”** And as in the case of Mary there is no satisfactory answer but with faith we continue to live the Christian life, to be about our Father’s affairs because no other way will bring true or lasting peace and happiness.

The Holy Family was a family with special grace but yet a family with trials. Every family has particular graces and blessings and every family also has difficulties and crosses. **The Holy Family is a model for families because despite their many trials, the family remained faithful, loving and united.** It is good to pray today to the Holy Family, to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, asking them to help our families persevere through their trials.

St. John Paul in 1979 early in his pontificate and often there after gave encouragement to families and in particular to parents. The Pope reminds us that the family is primary.

**“To all I say, revere and protect your family and your family life, for the family is the primary field of Christian action the place where your ‘royal priesthood’ is chiefly exercised. Modern conditions and social changes have created new patterns and new difficulties for family life and for Christian marriage. I want to say to you: do not be discouraged, do not follow the trends where a close-knit family is seen as**

outdated; the Christian family is more important for the Church and for society today than ever before.

“Dear fathers and mothers believe in your vocation, that beautiful vocation of marriage and parenthood which God has given to you. Believe that God is with you. Do not think that anything you will do in life is more important than to be a good Christian father and mother. The future of the Church, the future of humanity depends in great part on parents and on the family life that they build in their homes.

And may your always remain homes of prayer.

**A Blessing for the Family:** Please reach for loved ones with you or reach for them in your heart as we pray:

**Blessed are you, eternal God, King of the universe: you have called us in Jesus to be your beloved people, living pure and blameless in your sight.**

**Bless these families who ask for our grace. Let your Spirit guide their words and deeds, so that their light may shine before all and lead all who know them to give you praise.**

**May their homes be filled with the spirit of love, with the obedience of faith, and the strength of hope. May they live happy in your service, and bring them in your love to your eternal home.**

**Father, all Holy, we praise your name, and ask this blessing upon these families through Christ our Lord.**