

Homily
Holy Family C
December 27, 2015
St. Bernard Church

On this Feast of the Holy Family, it would be nice if we had a book about parenting from Mary and Joseph, but we don't. In fact, we really don't know much about the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth.

Perhaps, though, we can learn some of the most basic principles of Christian family life from the few things we do know about the life of the Holy Family.

We know, for example, that Joseph and Mary had Jesus in their home. That establishes the first principle for a Christian family:

Is Jesus in our home? Have we truly welcomed Him into every aspect of our marriages, every aspect of our family life?

Can we say that Jesus is the Lord and Master of our family, of our household, that everything that happens there is motivated by a desire to obey Him, to please Him, to honor Him?

As part of this first principle, for us parents, would our children know from us that we believe that it's our faith in Jesus Christ that guides us, that motivates us, that serves as the basis for our decisions, and provides the grace that gets our family through all of our trials and challenges?

After Mary and Joseph lost track of Jesus and then found him in the temple back in Jerusalem, the traditional translation for Jesus' explanation to them is this:

"Did you not know that I had to be about my Father's business?"

This is the second principle for Christian family life, that the entire family is focused on doing the Father's will.

That means, for all families, knowing and following the Bible and the teachings of the Catholic Church. God is never going to ask any married couple, any family, to do anything that is not consistent with the Bible or the teachings of the Catholic Church.

This means that the Catholic household must be a place of study, study of the Bible and what the Catholic Church teaches.

But, besides following Scripture and the Church, what is God's will for our particular family? What does He want us to do? Where does He want us to live? How does He want us to spend our money? How does He want us to serve others? And how does the family go about discerning God's specific will for each family?

There's a Proverb, Proverbs 29:18, that says: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

What this means for families is that if there is no vision, no clear sense of direction, the family perishes. It flounders.

What is the vision of Catholic parents for their family? What direction is the family going? Does our family have a clear purpose? Are we on a mission? Does everyone in the family know what that mission is?

Or are we just going with the flow, doing pretty much what other people, other families, are doing? To put it in computer terms, are we living by default?

If we are to know God's will for our family, and if each member of the family wants to know God's specific will for him or her, we need to learn to pray, to ask God to reveal His will for each of us and for our families, to help us learn to listen and to watch for how God will reveal His will to us, and then pray for God to give us the strength and courage to do His will, trusting in His grace and His providence.

Closing

Prayer for Families, from the Catholic Book of Blessings