

Holy Family Sunday
December 29, 2019
“Children for the Future”

Sir 3:2...14
Col 3:12-17
Mt 2:13...23

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Family life is certainly at risk in America today. Sadly, when family life is at risk, so, too, does the whole society begin to break down.

The statistics tell us much in this regard. Close to 50% of first marriages end in divorce. 50% of second marriages, likewise, end in divorce. 9% of young adults, aged 18-24, co-habit – while only 7% of that same age group are married. Furthermore, most marriages after co-habitation end in divorce!

Divorce wreaks havoc in the lives and on the personalities of children who experience the separation of their biological parents. 50% of these children have health problems – 30% need therapy. And they are twice as likely to commit a crime or even to take their own life!

A stable family life is at the heart of any enduring society or culture. Children learn their values from their parents. Parents model belief in God, personal morality, honesty, integrity, as well as patience, forbearance, steadfastness, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

Unfortunately, marriages can go awry for many reasons. Many people are often blind to their own immaturity and personal faults – as well as to those of their prospective spouses. They are often overcome by the different hormones that are released when they are “in love”. All too often, they are ill-prepared for the hard work of marriage as a life-long vocation. They forget or do not know that marriage is a call from God for personal growth, especially in unselfishness born from authentic love. Both parties will be required to make sacrifices to keep the marriage together and on behalf of their children.

Today, the Gospel of Matthew teaches us how God must be at the center of any enduring marriage. The spouses must have a relationship with God if they are to navigate the storms, the shoals, and the doldrums that every marriage experiences.

Both Mary and Joseph listened to God throughout their lives – both before and during their union. Joseph was especially attentive when danger threatened. We are told that he packed up and fled to Egypt at a moment's notice. He, Mary, and their child Jesus faced the hardships of that journey. Then, they had to live their exile in a foreign, pagan land.

Later, Joseph listened to God and returned to Israel when the time was right. But he settled in Galilee and in Nazareth, a small town often disdained by others. There, Joseph and Mary lived a very simple life of commitment and hard work, providing whatever was necessary for the nurture and growth of Jesus.

The readings from both the Old and New Testaments, likewise, have much to teach all family members of our own time. St. Paul tells us that we must all be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient. We must put up with and forgive one another. We can do this best if we truly love God and keep Him at the center of our lives and hearts. Even when we must correct family members, we must do so in the right spirit – with the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and the peace of Jesus to guide us.

Finally, the Book of Sirach counsels grown children never to lose respect and honor for the parents that God gave them. Sadly, only after they are parents themselves, do children realize and understand all the sacrifices that their parents made for them. Furthermore, when our parents grow old, we must help them in every way possible. Above all, we must be present to them who were so present to us when we were young.

Brothers and Sisters, the future of our nation and even our world will be in the hands of our children. What they do and how they behave will be dependent upon how we care for them and treat them in the here and now. We must make what we are, truly make what we say resonate in their soul!

So let us resolve always to be the best we can be for our children and young people. May we keep God at our center – And may God direct every decision as well as everything we do!

Amen.

December 29, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra