

Holy Family 2019-2020 Year A
Sirach 3.2-6,12-14///Colossians 3.12-21///Matthew 2.13-15,19-23

→Dr. Phil...the television personality and family psychologist, has written a book entitled Family First

→perhaps you have heard of it...or even may have read it...and if so you are not alone, since it became a best-seller for Dr. Phil, selling millions of copies in its first year of publication.

→clearly, these days there is an anxious hunger to know more... to do more...and to protect and preserve our families...and Dr. Phil has capitalized on that felt need.

→and make no mistake...this desire for healthy families is a good thing

→buying books on the subject...attending seminars...or just becoming more aware and committed to family life is an important step toward putting our families first.

→maybe if more of us would just trade some of those television hours into talking and playing together, or insist on protecting the family meal as sacred time...or learning to communicate honestly and openly with each other...it would be better still.

→so to the rescue of those wanting to promote family values in their own family...Dr. Phil writes a book and outlines what he calls the “five factors for a phenomenal family

→if you haven’t read the book...allow me to give you his five factors:

1. Create a nurturing and accepting family system where everyone’s uniqueness is encouraged...and where there is a strong sense of security in the home.
2. Promote rhythm in family life where by the family discovers order and balance.
3. Establish meaningful rituals and traditions, such as regular worship and family celebrations.

4. Be genuine in your communication with each other, and
5. Finally...learn how to manage crisis...so that the family can learn and grow

→however...our interest today is perhaps not so much in Dr. Phil's book...but in the message of our scripture readings...

PAUSE

→today is the Feast of the Holy Family...an appropriate feast on the first Sunday after the biggest family day of the year

→and today...we cannot help but notice how the brief glimpses of the home life of Jesus with Mary and Joseph...

→and when we notice the principles that characterized the Holy Family...we discover that the factors for a “phenomenal family” were present early on in the Bible...way before a modern commentator or family expert tried to sell a book on the subject.

→today we hear about several examples where Joseph, guided by God, is given the where-with-all to protect Jesus and his mother

→the priority Joseph and Mary place on their new family is refreshing and instructive...and they had no higher mission than to provide a home to nurture the well-being of Jesus.....the same priority and mission all of us have been charged with as well.

→happily, most Americans say that family life is their highest value...but sadly...our use of time and money and presence to each other...sometimes tell a different story

PAUSE

→when Joseph becomes aware of the plot by Herod to kill the newborn children of Bethlehem...he does not hesitate to take whatever measures necessary to protect his family.

→without delay...he gathers his family to flee to Egypt....

→I have often wondered how a man so poor that he could not afford a hotel room in Bethlehem for his wife's childbirth could afford a trip to Egypt...

→but Joseph and Mary's priority of providing family security and safety...of creating and preserving their family in a harsh world is very clear...

→likewise...in other glimpses from the childhood photo album provided in the Scriptures....we see that the Holy Family placed a high priority on providing family traditions and rituals...going up to the temple

→and they speak frankly and openly with each other in all circumstances...especially when Jesus was lost among the travelers from Jerusalem

→in the end...Dr. Phil would be very proud of them

PAUSE

→today's scriptures readings speak of the basic values that we still need to keep and strive for when it comes to our family

→the first reading from Sirach speaks of honoring parents

→ in the second reading, Paul uses words like: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience as qualities belonging to those who belong to a family, and finally

→in today's gospel we catch a glimpse of Jesus' family life and Joseph and Mary caring for their child, and caring for each other

PAUSE

→without a doubt things have changed and continue to change in our families, the way we are family, the way we live family life.....and we can, in a certain sense, become cynical, and lament and long for the "good old days"

OR we can recognize the change that is, or has happened and begin to deal with these in a way that preserves and encourages the growth of family values that are important

→recognizing the value of each one of us...

→creating a rhythm of order and balance along with meaningful celebrations and time together...

→being genuine and growing together and learning from each other when faced with challenging circumstances and situations....

PAUSE

→it should come as no surprise that at times we are confused and are no longer sure of how we go about building family life....and that is a good reason for us to celebrate this feast of the holy family

→[and] it is comforting to know that even in the family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus, things did not go smoothly, that there were problems and difficult decisions, risks and doubts, and probably arguments and disagreements

→when that happens to us.....it is then that we need to rely on each other and on the presence of God in our lives and in our homes...

→you see worked for the Holy Family...and it can work with our families as well