

THE HOLY FAMILY (C)

WHAT ROLE DOES GOD PLAY IN YOUR FAMILY?

From the prayer of St. Paul, every family in heaven and on earth gets its name from God, (Eph.3:15). He is right because the second reading tells us that we are God's children and we shall be like Him one day. Moreover, He made us and we belong to Him.

Hannah, was aware of that, so when she was not having any child, she prayed to God to help her. When she made her intention known, Eli the priest, interceded for her. God granted her request, and she got more than she asked for. Her child, Samuel, became a prophet. While Samuel was young, his mother taught him the fear of the Lord.

God wants us to have good families so He has given us the Holy Family to give us an example of how families should live together. Today we heard about how Mary and Joseph searched for Jesus when He could not be found among neighbours on their return from Jerusalem. Even though they allowed the child Jesus to be with friends and neighbours, they saw the need to look for Him when it was necessary.

Jesus also knew that even though He was the Son of God and was aware of what to do, He showed respect to His earthly parents. He was obedient to them and did what He was told. Even when He was old enough to be left alone, He listened to His mother at the wedding at Cana; (Jn.2:1-11). What lessons are Hannah and Mary teaching modern day mothers and wives? Hannah was a God-fearing wife, and also very prayerful. She cast her cares on God when things were not easy for her. When her rival, Peninnah, was laughing at her because she was not having a child, she resorted to prayer and fasting. Mary was also a caring and responsible mother and wife.

Elkanah loved his wife Hannah. Joseph also loved Mary and protected Her and the child Jesus. He took them to Egypt to escape from the wrath of Herod. What message are they giving to the modern day husbands and fathers?

Families today are faced with many problems, because, the source of family life which is marriage is facing a lot of problems. The meaning of marriage is lost, so also its sanctity. People marry out of convenience and so the children born are also treated out of convenience.

What role does God play in your family? How many parents pray together with their children every morning and evening? What about reading the word of God and sharing the message from it? How many parents, from time to time sit down with their children to talk about the realities of life, like facing difficulties, perseverance and hard work in studies and at work? Are parents able to let their children know that life is not all about joy and happiness, but about sacrifice and hard work as well, and that, it is in God that we find success and true happiness?

Many parents hide behind the child's rights regulations to shirk their responsibilities. They don't want to expend more, so when the child decides to leave the house after attaining the age of eighteen, they give their blessing. It is evident that there are a lot of temptations and risks involved in living an independent life at that stage in life, yet the child is allowed to move out because the law says so. They forget that when there is trouble they will be affected, morally, physically, psychologically and financially. Children too are eager to move out of the house, because they do not want to be controlled. Many want to behave like the prodigal son who could not manage his affairs because he was not mature enough to take care of himself, (Lk.15:10ff). Sirach has this advice for children: "Whoever honours his father atones for his sins; he who gives glory to his mother prepares a treasure for himself. Whoever honours his father will receive joy from his own children and will be heard when he prays. Whoever glorifies his father will have long life. Whoever obeys the Lord gives comfort to his mother" (Sirach3:3-6).

"Listen, my sons and daughters to a father's instruction and pay attention so that you may gain insight; do not discard my teaching. For when I, too, was a young boy, and my mother fondly looked on me as special, my father taught me and said to me: 'Treasure my words in your heart; listen to my directions and you will live,'" (Prov.4:1-4). Disobedience to parents, lack of faith in God, and neglect of duties of parents breeds irresponsible, lazy, and wayward citizens. We should not forget that the family is the first Church and so we should make God the centre of our lives.