

Holy Family Sunday
December 30, 2018
“God’s Family”

1Sam 1:20...28

1Jn 3:1...24

Lk 2:41-52

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We all want to be part of a family. Human beings were created to live in family units for the nurture and self-preservation of the human race. Children thrive when they have good parenting – And spouses learn to be unselfish in meeting the responsibilities they have toward each other and for their children.

If we are especially fortunate, once in a great while, someone outside of our own family circle will tell us that “we are family”. This is a great honor. It means that they have embraced us with a special kind of love and trust!

Unfortunately, authentic family life is in jeopardy today for many reasons. Over half of spouses divorce. Over half of our children live with only one biological parent. Many children are born out of wedlock. People enter erotic relationships without the permanent commitment of marriage. And many LGBTQ partners are seeking to adopt or to be impregnated elsewhere!

Added to all this is the fact that cyberspace has taken over the world and family life. In far too many cases, family members no longer converse as they should. They don’t relate. They live in a world increasingly isolated with their phone, tablet, or laptop screens. These instruments occupy every minute of their time – for their new god is the “god of the internet”!

All the scripture passages for today tell us a great deal about what true families can and should be.

Samuel was given to Hannah after years of barrenness. He was an answer to prayer – truly a gift from God! Furthermore, Hannah was faithful to her promise to give her boy back to God. Thus, Hannah brought Samuel to the Temple despite the fact that the sons of Eli were wayward – and scoundrels as priests. She trusted that God’s will would still be carried out for her son. And it was! Samuel would become a truly great prophet!

In the Gospel selection, Mary and Joseph are distraught because Jesus is missing. When they find him, Jesus is in the Temple interacting with the official teachers of the Chosen People. He is asking them questions and giving them answers that astonish them.

At the age of beginning maturity and manhood, Jesus was indicating what his mission would be someday! He had listened to God and God had called him to the work of salvation. What is interesting is that some of those teachers who listened to Jesus might well have been among those who would reject him 21 years later!

In the New Testament reading, St. John informs us that we are all part of the family of God. We are all God's children – the least, the greatest, the best, the worst – every one of us! We are truly family because God loves us despite our shortcomings, our failures, our sins, and our crimes. God knows our hearts and has made us restless until we rest in Him and possess Him. Indeed, much of our sinfulness is the result of trying to fill that restlessness with something or someone less than God Himself!

Not only are we God's children and part of God's family, but we can also become divine ourselves! However, for this to happen, we must accept God on His terms. We must have faith – the relationship of faith. That is, we must believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ – We must also keep the Commandment of Love that Jesus has given us.

Brothers and Sisters, the only way to truly love, is the way of the Gospel of Jesus. The true way to love is in the way that the best families behave. They accept everyone; they reject no one. They leave each other with the freedom to answer God's call. They listen to the old if they are young – and to the young if they are old. They don't control; they don't manipulate. They forgive; they speak the truth; they are honest and forthright. They admonish; they correct; but they are also patient with the slow growth of one another. Above all, they keep God at the center of all things, and they listen to the Holy Spirit in their hearts!

So, let us pray, today, that we can all become this way – the way God created us to be His own family!

Amen.

December 30, 2018

Msgr. Russell G. Terra

