

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY YEAR C - Dec 27, 2015

Does anyone want to be taught by a saint, Pope St John Paul II? Then read what he wrote on the family. How many of you have read his work “Letter to Families” or his apostolic exhortation “On the Role of the Family in the Modern World”? Well my apostolic goal is that the parishioners of St Louis will be the wisest and holiest Catholics in the diocese. Do you want to be wise and holy? Ok. Your homework is to go to my website, www.johnpurk.com and click on the Formation – Marriage tab and read his two readings on the Family.

Professor John Bergsma tells us in our first reading from the Old Testament, that Hannah is a type of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Samuel is a type of Christ who is dedicated to the Lord. Hannah’s name in Hebrew means “grace” or “favor,” so her name is quite literally a foreshadowing of a woman who would be “full of grace”, Mary (Luke 1:28). Both women had natural impediments to childbirth: Hannah was barren and Mary was virginal. Both bore sons who were answers to prayer, boys who became priest-prophets and saviors for their people.

Hannah’s song of thanksgiving in 1 Sam 2:1-10 is similar to the Blessed Mother’s “Magnificat” in Luke 1:46-55. And Luke refers to Jesus “growing in wisdom and favor with God and men” (Luke 2:40,52), just like Samuel did.

And we also note the generosity of Hannah, to God’s generosity toward her, (God gave her a son) and she returns the son back to God. The Blessed Mother, was given a Son and she gives him back to God at the wedding Feast of Cana and at the foot of the cross (John 19:25). Yes, at a wedding between a man and a woman.

Also, remember that Hannah was barren and the conception of Samuel is the answer to her prayer. This shows that God is the author of life and has the power to open and shut the womb and he is also the author of death. [And the church teaches that we have to refrain from the illegitimate manipulation over life; whether through contraception, *in vitro* fertilization, surrogate motherhood and over death through euthanasia, or unwarranted application of the death penalty. The church’s 2000 years of experience teach us to respect the authority of God in matters of life and death.]

Also in the First Reading and Gospel, Samuel and Jesus are brought up to Israel’s central sanctuary and are left there. Children are ultimately gifts from God. We care for them and lead them until they can choose to follow him in their own call. Because each person has to discern how they will offer their lives for his service. Besides good marriages, vocations are desperately needed for the religious life and the priesthood.

So parents, if God is calling your child to this type of service be like Hannah and Mary and offer them to God and let God have them. And our responsorial psalm says “Happy the one who has God’s strength.” Those who give themselves to God whether in the church or in the family will be happy. God made everything don’t you think he is capable of making you happy?

Another theme in this Gospel is “Our True Father”. Even though the Blessed Mother refers to Joseph as Jesus’ father, Jesus points to our eternal destiny when he says “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”.

Because of our baptism we have been “born of God,” and he is Our Father. The point of the Second Reading from 1 John is that all Fatherhood has its origin in God (Eph 3:15 [Greek *patria*]). In the church’s spiritual tradition, this powerful doctrine of childhood to God, not slave to God, is the source of great joy for us.

We are also instructed by the humility of Jesus, who being God, submitted to his parents and was “obedient to them.” The creator was obedient to the creature.

In families, as in all human organizations, there has to be some order of authority for the sake of the common good. Notice in the Holy Family that St. Joseph was entrusted with its leadership, though he was neither immaculately conceived like his wife, nor divine like his son. Yet in his role as father, he had the support of his obedient son and the trust and submission of his wife, which certainly must have been a great encouragement. Any position of leadership and authority, whether in the community, at work, in the church or at home means to have a responsibility for the well-being of others. [In our culture, the role of the father is under attack. It falsely claims that fathers and mothers are optional, and children when raised by two women or two men rather than by the natural right to be raised by a father and mother are raised just as well. Yet the Scriptures assume that the Christian father is the one who takes responsibility for, and leads and serves his family under the ultimate guidance of Christ himself.]

[But there is also a limit to obedience to authority. And that boundary is sin, because to obey someone in sin is to disobey a higher authority, God. No one is obliged to follow another authority into sin. Likewise in the husband-wife relationship, the injunction to be “subordinate” only holds in the realm of morally permissible action. A parent’s authority in the home does not extend to violation of the law of Christ and the Church.]

The Holy Family and all families are an icon, a likeness of the Most Holy Trinity. God is three persons but one essence, one being. The Trinity is called a ‘divine communion

of persons' and the family is called a 'human communion of persons' patterned after this divine communion. Communion means "common union".

[Just as God is united, we are called to be united individually in our body, mind and spirit and collectively in the family as father, mother and child. And in the church - as priest, consecrated religious and laity. This is called being integrated, being whole and being holy.]

But because of disobedience and sin, living integrated lives in union with God and others is difficult and a task and burden. But Jesus came to make the yoke and burden of this work easier and lighter. He does not take away this work of holiness but he makes it easier and lighter to accomplish it. How? By showing us how to be obedient. Life in the human family is making us fit to live in the family of God for all eternity. Since God is obedient, life prepares us to live in this holy and obedient - other centered relationship forever. Jesus saves us from sin to bring us into the family of Our Father

Just as a train travels across the country by staying on the tracks and being obedient to the tracks, we make great progress traveling to heaven by being obedient to the ways of God. God is obedient! There is a perfect obedience of relationship within the Most Holy Trinity. They submit and obey one another.

The optional first reading explains how God put order into the family. He sets a father over his children. We see in the culture when there are no fathers over the children – then the children have no outside boundaries, they have no self control, or self governance. And then when they are out of control since they can't govern themselves they end up getting governed by the government. And it is not pretty when that happens.

When we follow Gods plan he attaches blesses and favors to them,. He who honors his parents will be saved from sins invitations. Their prayer will be heard. They will be gladdened by children and will live a long life. The psalm says if you walk in the ways of the Lord you will be blessed.

The second reading says to let the peace of Christ control your hearts and be thankful. We don't let the flesh or our appetites and attractions control our hearts. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And how does his word dwell in you? By reading and meditating on the scriptures. And what is a good way to remember Gods word, make a song out of it. So the music and choir is helping us to be in peace and be thankful when we leave here for the rest of the day and the rest of the week. Wise songs are used to encourage us and instruct us in the community. The choir proclaims Gods word in song.

And the optional reading also says, 'Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. You can't steer a car with two drivers. So wives are under the mission of the husband – to do what? Save and protect the family, get everyone home to Our Father in heaven. That is the mission of the husband. He patterns his leadership after Jesus – who leads by serving and laying down his life for his bride and his children. When the husband is under the Lord, he is trying to fulfill the will of his Father in heaven. But he can't fulfill the will of the Father in a family unless he has help and cooperation.

A man's gift is truth and justice but he does not have all of the gifts, so he needs the gift of woman to help him, he needs the gift of how to be more kind and gentle and peaceful to balance his gift of truth and justice. In that way truth and kindness can meet, justice and peace will kiss. And children have a gift of innocence, simplicity and purity. They teach us how to daily renew ourselves in innocence so that we can enter the kingdom of God. As they live in the presence of the parents they teach us how to live in the presence of God, and search for God when we lose his presence, like Mary and Joseph did. They teach us how to be pure in our relationships, how to live graced friendships.

And children obey your parents in everything. That brings us to the gospel reading. Jesus created Mary and Joseph, yet he obeyed them in everything. If Jesus can obey, if the creator of the world obeys his creatures then children you can obey your parents.

[How is that lived? We look at the gospels. First of all Mary and Joseph have lived in the presence of God for 12 years. Then they go to Jerusalem and they lose Jesus, the presence of God for three days. This is a foreshadowing of Jesus being lost in the tomb for three days and the community loses his human presence. But when he hides himself from us in feeling what is he doing? He is doing his Father's will and working in the Father's house. Where is his Father's house? It is inside of us. He is working in us. Cleaning it out inspiring us, giving us wisdom, his Spirit so that we can sing praises to him always. And Mary and Joseph teach us how to respond when we feel we have lost God's presence. We go searching for him, and when we find him again we do what Mary did ponder and keep all of these things in our heart and in this way we too will advance in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.]

So together let us be like God and obey the truth so that we can live in the presence of the Father Son and Holy Spirit for all eternity. Amen? 1513 (1983) WORDS