

The Feast of Holy family (Luke 2:41-52)

Recently I happened to read a Catholic Magazine which speaks about the Catholic Families today- it brings to light the many crises and challenges families encounter today's world especially because of Modernism and technology. It makes a comparison between Catholic families 50 years ago and today- how often people living under the same roof see each other, talk and pray? It also places families into several categories like- Single Parent, divorced and re-married, family of adjustment- (sticking together due to family, social and financial pressure), dysfunctional, functional, happy, healthy, Holy families.

The gospel shows us Jesus at the age of twelve. Today's Gospel is titled "The Finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple," "The Boy Jesus in Jerusalem" and "Jesus among the Teachers." The story exposes three aspects of family life. The family of Jesus is faithful and observant Jews, who annually make the Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Jesus as an individual in this world loves God and is devoted to God more than to his family. Listen to the words of Jesus "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). The most interesting lesson from this story, however, is the way it ends: "Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (v.51). The twelve-year old adult Jesus already knows that his mission is to be in his Father's house and be about his Father's business. Then he also knows how to respect and obedient to his parents. Here you need to remember the first four commandments. 1. I am the LORD your God: you shall not have strange Gods before me. 2. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. 3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day. 4. Honor your father and your mother. By giving example of practicing these four commandments, the holy family is telling us that if we

practice these four commandments with a priority, then it will be easy for you to obey the rest of the commandments. Jesus is only twelve, but listens to the reaction of the people who heard him: “all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (v. 47). “Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor” (v.52). Can you imagine how much influence did Mary and Joseph had in raising their child Jesus in divine knowledge and human favor? When we reflect on the fact that for every one year of his public life Jesus spent ten years in family life, then we shall begin to understand the importance and priority Jesus gave to family life.

What about our families today? In spite of all the problems that we see in our society today, in spite of all the problems that we complain about our families today; the question we need to ask ourselves; is it possible to have a happy, healthy, holy family today’s world? Or what do I need to do make my family happy, healthy, and a holy family? The answer is very simple. When the Lord created family as a basic unit of the society, he intended to have a structure and hierarchy for the family. In that structure or hierarchy, God comes first, the husband and wife come second, the children come third, employment comes fourth, everything else comes last. Unfortunately for many people it is the other way around.

There is a story of little boy called John. John greets his father Tony with a question as he returns from work: “Daddy, how much money do you make an hour?” Tony is surprised and says: “Look, son, not even your mother knows. Don’t bother me now, I’m tired.” “But Daddy, just tell me please! How much do you make an hour?” the boy insists. The father finally gives up and replies: “Twenty dollars.” “Okay, Daddy,” the boy continues, “Could you lend me ten dollars?” The father yells at him: “So that was the reason you asked how much I earn, right?

Now, go to sleep and don't bother me anymore!" At night Tony thinks over what he said to his son and starts feeling guilty. Maybe my son needed to buy something. Finally, Tony goes to his son's room and said: "Here's the money you asked for. On receiving the money from his Daddy's hand the boy reaches under his pillow and brings out some more money. "Now I have enough! Now I have twenty dollars!" exclaims the son! And, then, giving that twenty dollars to his Dad, the boy asked his father, "Daddy, could you sell me one hour of your time?" Today's gospel has a message for this man and for all of us, and the message is that we need to invest more of our time in our family life.

We have two lives, a private or family life and a public or professional one. These two lives should be in harmony but very often they are in tension. Whereas Jesus resolved the tension by giving priority to his private life, we, unfortunately, often try to resolve it by giving priority to our professional life, leaving our family life to suffer. Rose Sands writes about the unhappy man who thought the only way he could prove his love for his family was to work hard. "To prove his love for her, he swam the deepest river, crossed the widest desert and climbed the highest mountain. She divorced him. He was never home." Your job may be as important as saving the world. But the Feast of Holy Family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus reminds and challenges us to value and invest in our private life with our families before our professional life at the work place.