

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

DECEMBER 28, 2025

Today we celebrate the model for all Christian families, the Holy Family of Nazareth. Like many families in today's world, the Holy Family was poor. In fact, in the early years of Jesus' life they were homeless. We know that Jesus was born in a stable. But shortly after his birth, he lived as an immigrant in Egypt. They would have to find whatever lodging they could, and Joseph would have to find work in a country where he did not know the language and had no connections. They would have faced the same suspicion and resentment that so many immigrants in our society have to deal with.

Though the Holy Family lived in poverty, they had the ingredient most necessary for any family to be happy. They had Jesus. With Jesus at the center of their family, they could weather any storm. Though they had little money, they were blessed with the greatest treasure any home could have - Jesus.

This is very important for us to remember in the hectic world we live in. We can get so wrapped up in all the details of having and maintaining a home, that we forget the reason we have one in the first place. We have a home so that we can show love to one another and so that we can raise children who will come to know, love and serve our Lord.

All parents want to give the best they can for their children. It is natural for a mother and father to work hard so that their children will want for nothing. But the most important gift we can give them is our witness to the love of God. If they have Jesus in their hearts, they will want for nothing. No matter how difficult life will get for them they will always have the strength of God to get them through it. On the other hand, if we do not teach our children how much God loves them, they can never be happy no matter how many presents we shower them with.

Consider all the presents the children of our parish received over this past week. Dolls, computers, bicycles, video games, clothes, cell phones....the list is unending. Even though we have spent thousands of dollars on these gifts, which of them will have lasting value for them? Which of those gifts will console them when they are picked on at school? Which of those presents will help them deal with peer pressure? Which of them will teach them to be kind and loving to others? When they are older, which of those presents will help them when a relationship fails, when their house is foreclosed on or when they are diagnosed with a serious illness?

But if along with those gifts we've also given them faith, then we've given them something that lasts — something no one can take away, something that will guide them long after Christmas is over, even into their own adult lives and families.

The "secret" to a happy family is simple: it's Jesus. When He's at the center of our home, there's

a peace and joy that only God can give. And the way we put Jesus at the center is through prayer — coming to Mass together every Sunday, and praying together at home, even if it's just saying grace before meals. That kind of foundation makes good times even sweeter and hard times easier to bear. It helps everyone be more patient with each other. It creates a kind of love in the home that people notice. And it carries us through life until we reach our home in heaven.

We all want peaceful homes — places where we can get away from the chaos of the world. In today's second reading, Saint Paul gives us a roadmap for that. And it starts with forgiveness. "As the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do." Families fall apart all the time because someone won't forgive. And honestly, the people we love the most are often the ones who hurt us the most. But if we hold onto grudges, our homes can never become the safe, healing places we want them to be. So maybe this Christmas season is the time to forgive someone in your family you haven't talked to in years. Let go of that weight. Try to rebuild the relationship if you can.

Saint Paul also tells us to "be thankful." Maybe our families aren't perfect. Maybe life isn't how we imagined it. But gratitude keeps us from getting stuck in negativity. It helps us see just how much good we actually have. Grateful people are more cheerful, more generous — and nothing makes a home feel warmer and happier than a family full of gratitude and generosity. Isn't that the kind of family we all want? If so, let's start practicing gratitude.

Finally, Saint Paul urges us to "put on love, that is, the bond of perfection." It's love that turns people into a family and a house into a home. And Christian love isn't just a warm feeling or simple affection — it's a choice. It's choosing, day after day, to put someone else's needs before your own.

That's why a mom drags herself out of bed at 3:00 a.m. to feed a crying baby, even when she's exhausted. It's why a husband spends his day off tackling the chores instead of zoning out in front of the TV. Those small, everyday sacrifices — the quiet, loving things we do for each other — are the most powerful lessons parents can give their children. They show, in the clearest way possible, that no matter what, this family is committed to one another.

Family life is the heart of the Church. As a community, we can only be as strong as our families are. So let's put our commitment to family life at the top of our priorities. When we do, both the Church and the world around us will be renewed, and we'll experience the peace and joy that come from a home filled with God's love.

Holy Family of Nazareth, pray for us!