Know & Grow

Informative pieces intended to help you know more about our faith and to promote both individual and community growth

KNOW & GROW TOPIC OF THE WEEK: *THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, & JOSEPH*

The devotion to the Holy Family was born in Bethlehem, together with the Baby Jesus. The shepherds went to adore the Child and, at the same time, they gave honor to His family. Later, in a similar way, the three wise men came from the East to adore and give honor to the newborn King with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that would be safeguarded by His family.

We can go further to affirm that in a certain sense Christ, Himself, was the first devotee of His family. He showed His devotion to His mother and foster father by submitting Himself, with infinite humility, to the duty of filial obedience towards them. This is what St Bernard of Clairvaux said in this regard, '*God, to whom angels submit themselves and who principalities and powers obey, was subject to Mary; and not only to Mary but Joseph also for Mary's sake [….]. God obeyed a human creature; this is humility without precedent. A human creature commands God; it is sublime beyond measure.*' (*First Homily on the 'Missus Est'*).

Today's celebration demonstrates Christ's humility and obedience with respect to the fourth commandment, whilst also highlighting the loving care that His parents exercised in His keeping. The servant of God, Pope John Paul II, in 1989, entitled his Apostolic Exhortation, '*Redemptoris Custos'* (Guardian of the Redeemer) which was dedicated to the person and the mission of Saint Joseph in the life of Christ and of the Church. After exactly a century, he resumed the teaching of Pope Leo XIII, for who Saint Joseph '.. *shines among all mankind by the most august dignity, since by divine will, he was the guardian of the Son of God and reputed as His father among men'* (Encyclical *Quamquam Pluries* [1889] n. 3). Pope Leo XIII continued, '.. *Joseph became the guardian, the administrator, and the legal defender of the divine house whose chief he was.[…] It is, then, natural and worthy that as the Blessed Joseph ministered to all the needs of the family at Nazareth and girt it about with his protection, he should now cover with the cloak of his heavenly patronage and defend the Church of Jesus Christ.*' Not many years before, blessed Pope Pius IX had proclaimed Saint Joseph, 'Patron of the Catholic Church' (1870)

Almost intuitively, one can recognize that the mysterious, exemplary guardianship enacted by Joseph was conducted firstly, in a yet more intimate way, by Mary. Consequently, the liturgical feast of the Holy Family speaks to us of the fond and loving care that we must render to the Body of Christ. We can understand this in a mystical sense, as guardians of the Church, and also in the Eucharistic sense. Mary and Joseph took great care of Jesus' physical body. Following their example, we can and must take great care of His Mystical Body, the Church, and the Eucharist which He has entrusted to us. If Mary was, in some way, '*the first tabernacle in history*' (John Paul II *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 55) then we the Tabernacle in which Our Lord chose to reside in person, in His Real Presence, was also entrusted to us. We can learn from Mary and Joseph! What would they ever have overlooked in the care of Jesus' physical body? Is there something, therefore, that we can withhold for the right and adoring care of His Eucharistic Body? No amount of attention, no sane act of love and adoring respect will ever be too much! On the contrary, our adoration and respect will always be inferior to the great gift that comes to us in the Holy Eucharist.

Consecration to the Holy Family

This act of consecration to the Holy Family is intended to unite the members of your family more closely to God and to one another.

Prayer:

O Jesus, our most loving Redeemer, Who having come to enlighten the world, with Your teaching and example, willed to pass the greater part of Your life in humility and subjection to Mary and Joseph in the poor home of Nazareth, thus sanctifying the Family that was to be an example for all Christian families, graciously receive our family as it dedicates and consecrates itself to You this day. Defend us, guard us, and establish among us Your holy fear, true peace and concord in Christian love: in order that by conforming ourselves to the divine pattern of Your Family we may be able, all of us without exception, to attain to eternal happiness.

Mary, dear Mother of Jesus and Mother of us, by your kind intercession make this our humble offering acceptable in the sight of Jesus, and obtain for us His graces and blessings.

Saint Joseph, most holy Guardian of Jesus and Mary, assist us by your prayers in all our spiritual and temporal necessities; that we may be able to praise our divine Savior Jesus, together with Mary and you, for all eternity.

Looking at the Holy Family, we see the love, the protection, and the diligent care that they gave to the Redeemer. We can not fail to feel uneasiness, perhaps a shameful thought, for the times in which we have not rendered the appropriate care and attention to the Blessed Eucharist. We can only ask for forgiveness and do penance for all the sacrilegious acts and the lack of respect that are committed in front of the Blessed Eucharist. We can only ask the Lord, through the intersession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, for a greater love for their Son Incarnate, who has decided to remain here on earth with us every day until the end of time.

Source: Catholicculture.org, Trinity Communications