

Feast of the Holy Family

My beloved brothers and sisters, can you imagine with me for just a moment, the wonder and the awe on the faces of Joseph and Mary, and they present the Child committed to them as His earthly parents in the scene in today's Gospel. Each of them knew that this Child was the Holy One of God born in the Flesh, Emmanuel-God who is with us! Imagine the sense of awe they must have felt as Simeon spoke these words in Praise of the God of Salvation!

My beloved brothers and sisters: how I treasure the memories of my family! Most certainly, my family was not a perfect family; we had our struggles. I was a rascal. We were poor; although I never knew we were poor! However, I am so grateful to God for the family He gave me- they molded me and shaped me and my values, into the person that I am! It was within this family that all of us gradually learned the truth of who we are as human persons, and who God is, who we are called to be, and how we are called to use our gifts and talents for God and His Kingdom and for the world. That is why the Church is the first and constant defender of the Family, as God designed it from the very origins of time! God gives us our human dignity, but it is within the family that we are taught to live in accordance with that dignity! And we know from sociological studies that healthy families are absolutely essential to the growth and formation of healthy adults!

For each one of us, our journey of discovery on this earth begins with the family. It is here that we learn the truth of who we are and who God is, and who we are called to be. And so, today, we contemplate the Holy Family, as God has designed it from the beginning. God teaches us, within our family lives, the immeasurable dignity that He has bestowed upon each one of us; this began with the moment we were conceived and then, began to blossom as our mothers and fathers held us with awe and wonder, and immeasurable love in their arms for the first time and many times. It was taught to us, through our family lives, as our mothers and fathers cradled us in their arms, when we were distraught, hurt, angry, lost, wrong, naughty, disobedient, and forgiven, again, and again and again. It was taught to us by our families who stood by us in our tears, and our

joys, in the pride on their faces in our accomplishments, and the sorrows reflected in their faces when we moved on in life.

It is within our families, that each one of us was taught to love, unconditionally, our God and each other; to do what is right, regardless of the personal cost; to live our lives to the fullest-- This is what we celebrate today on this Holy Feast Day!