

## **Family - Where Life Begins and Love Never Ends**

Every year right after Christmas, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. In Jesus, God unites Himself to us, as He fully enters into our human experience, with all its peaks and valleys.

Today our reflection is on the fact that 'The only- begotten Son of God entered into our human experience through a Family.

Jesus spent 90% of His life in the simplicity of family life. Only a few chapters of Scripture are devoted to this lengthy period:

First of all, the original Christmas was anything but cozy. A woman nine months pregnant rides 75 miles on the back of a donkey over bumpy, dusty roads so she can have her baby in a stable full of animals.

Quickly after the birth they have to pick up and flee for their lives, seeking asylum in a foreign land.

Twelve years later, Jesus goes missing for several days. Can you image what Mary and Joseph must have been thinking - Help we have lost God!

Now remember Joseph is a saint, Mary is without sin, Jesus is God incarnate, yet they still faced challenges, difficulties, tense moments, and opportunities for misunderstanding.

My Dear Friends - Welcome to real family life.

Think about it. The creator of the universe spent most of His human life as a craftsman, working with His dad in the family business and ultimately taking it over.

Mary, the holiest of all creatures, spent most of her time changing diapers, cooking, and cleaning.

Therefore the secret to holiness is not to do extraordinary things, but to do ordinary things with extraordinary love and gratitude.

In the Family there are difficulties, but those difficulties are overcome with Love. Hatred is not capable of overcoming any difficulty. Division of hearts cannot overcome any difficulty.

Only Love is able to overcome. Love is about celebration, love is joy, Love is moving forward.

Love began in each one of us with our creation by God and the intimate sharing of love of our parents.

This love continues to grow each day, and the Baby Jesus waits for each one of us here with open arms and an open heart.

When we speak of Love, it is important to understand what Love really is:

- Think about your relationship with your family.
- Think about your relationship with God and how He loves you.

The first thing you will notice is that Love is not a Feeling. Feelings might start off a love relationship, but they cannot sustain it.

Love involves primarily giving, not receiving. It is a decision-commitment to spend time with and follow through on responsibilities made to the loved one. It takes work.

Love is unconditional. True love has no strings attached. Unconditional love is caring for a person for the way he or she is, not the way I want him or her to be.

Love is forever. True love does not waver. No condition of time is put on it.

If I love you, I feel responsible for your life, growth, and the development of all your human powers.

The great gift of Love is that I help you love yourself.

And lastly Love means the affirmation, not the possession of the one loved. True love allows the loved one the freedom to be him or herself.

God has made a covenant with us. He is always faithful to His commitment of Love and Mercy even though we may turn away from Him.

He wants us to love the same way that He loves us - with Forgiveness, Compassion and Mercy.

The readings of the Mass give us good advice to improve our own family life.

The 1st reading talks about the honor and respect of children to their parents: "Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother"

The 2nd reading identifies virtues that should be exercised in family life: "Put on holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another."

We need to be open to the grace of God and accept that we make mistakes, and to have the courage of rectifying, sometimes asking for forgiveness and changing the way we do things.

This is what Family life is all about. It is a school of virtues for both parents and children. It is a place to find God, to learn how to deal with God and with others.

It is where we learn to love and to be loved. It is the place where we learn to pray and to practice charity with others.

Pope Francis said the following about Families:

In marital life there are often quarrels ... Husband and wife, have you quarreled? — Children with parents? Did you quarrel intensely?

It's not right, but it isn't the problem: the problem is that this sentiment must not be there the next day.

Therefore... the day must never end without making peace in the family.

And how do I make peace?

- just a small gesture, a little thing.
- A caress suffices, without words, but never end the day without making peace in the family. Understood?
- Hey, it's not easy! But it must be done. And ... life will be more beautiful.

My Dear Friends, I would like to close with the following thought:

Family - Where Life Begins and Love Never Ends!

May Baby Jesus Open our Hearts to His Love,  
Now and Forever, Amen!