I've been thinking, and I'm going to say something that may sound like heresy, but I don't think that the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had all that perfect a life together. Think of it; the family began when an unmarried teenage girl from a solid, religious family found herself pregnant. Shameful. Embarrassing. Her fiancé learns of her predicament as she tells him a story about angels and the Spirit of God. He still loves her ... but he doesn't believe her. Yet, somehow, he finds it in his heart to marry her quietly and right away, they hafta pull up stakes and take a long journey because of the whim and edict of some politician. When they get to where they need to be, she's ready to give birth, he hasn't made a reservation anywhere, they have no money to buy or bribe anybody off, so they have their first child while they're homeless, bedding down in a barn. And, as if things weren't bad enough already, the crazy jealous king in the area wants to kill off all the little kids in the region for fear one of them would grow up to supplant him on the throne. So, the little family flees the violence and the poverty of the town and go to live in another country as migrants, aliens, asylum seekers. Finally when things settle down back home and the political situation is a little less threatening, they go back and live quiet lives making tables and chairs, never more than a few shekels in their pockets, watching their little Son grow, until, his heart worn out....
by a hard life, the husband dies in the arms of his wife and the one he called his Son.

Not exactly the pretty picture the Hallmark Channel would paint of life happily ever after!

Family is so celebrated as an ideal: gathering together; fending for one another; sacrificing for one another; proud as the children grow and succeed; loving one another through a long life together; missing the ones who have passed, cherishing the ones who are here, welcoming the ones who join us along the way.

But, who of us comes from such an ideal family? Husbands and wives sometimes don’t make it together to a silver or golden anniversary. Children fight with each other. Jobs are lost. Mortgages don’t get paid. Age and illness rob of memory and independence. Tempers simmer. Doors get slammed. Too many drinks, too many pills help us cope … until they don’t. Grudges are nursed. Good people die too young. Differences are condemned and ostracized. Terrible things are said. Tears are shed. Homes are broken and hearts too. So what are we, living in these far from perfect families, supposed to do? What would God have us do to be holy?

One thing: “kindness to a father will not be forgotten,” … “Put on, as God’s chosen ones … kindness.” There will always be difficult people in our lives. There will always be tough times even in the best of families. There will always be things about one another we’ll never understand and find hard to accept. There will always be people we love who don’t seem to be able to love themselves or love us either. But, God asks that before we slam the door, before we write them off, before we tell them to go to hell, before we kick the dust off our feet and never look
back, before that, ask yourself, “What would kindness look like here?” What would be a kind thing to say? What would be a little act of kindness we could do? What in this situation, with this person who is standing on my last nerve, what would be the kind of thing I could say or do or write or show that would tell the world that when I screwed up, God didn’t throw me away; God didn’t forget me. God gave me His love and offered His forgiveness over and over again.

Is your family not a Holy Family? Is your family sometimes more like a train wreck? Well, it’ll probably never be perfect or ideal, but if you try to show a little kindness, it may get better, and, at the very least, you’ll be the better for it.