

Mass of The Holy Family of Jesus Mary, and Joseph
December 29, 2019
Year A – Mathew 2:13-15, 19-23
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

I we discussed at Christmas Mass, God *choose* to come to us, be *with* us and to *teach* us and God often did this from the margins of society my friends. In God's choices to enter this world physically and in the later preaching of Jesus, we are reminded time and time again that it all was occurring on the margins. To those down on their luck, unwanted and unloved, the reviled, the poor, those outside the faith, and those who were sick. So, if you want to meet God, you must go to the margins of society as that is where God has always been and is still there waiting for you to be Jesus' hands and feet in ministry and love.

These facts are just as radical today as then, and when we look at our readings today, we find another radical teaching about the family. It can be a bit hard to digest when wrapped in some hierarchical trappings of the era but when Paul wrote to the Colossians, family life was very simple to understand – the husband reigned supreme and all fell under his will and authority. Wives had no say or rights, children could be sold into service or sold out-right. With this understanding, to give voice to the 'lesser' in the family unit of that time (that is to say that husbands must love and obey their wives and parents love and cherish their children) is a game changer that we can still draw upon as God's call for us to love each other transcends the norms and often the practices of our secular society.

Whether looking at how God chose to enter this world, and the fact that God loved us so much to even do it, or when reviewing the readings today of the family that include the Holy Family, it is easy to forget the situations and circumstances of the time and fail to grasp the extreme significance they represented in their radical expressions of love for each other.

Narrowing our focus to that of the family I first want to reflect on the 'traditional' family and then expand upon that to include newer definitions of family that we have come to understand and appreciate as we mature in the wisdom of love. In reflecting on the traditional family and St. Matthew's writings in today's readings (MT 2:13-15,19-23) my mind easily went back to a review of my parents. My mother becoming a professional woman at a time that most moms were not in order to help provide for us. My father working a second job to make sure ends would meet and we had a Christmas full of gifts we expected as children. Their career decisions made, not fully on what they *wanted* to do, but on what they *needed* to do in order to provide for their children. The time they sacrificed and poured into handmade gifts we kids treasured still give me fond memories but wasn't until I was much older did I realize the love they had for me that they would go to such extremes to make sure I did not go without. And now, as they age it becomes my time to start doing the same for them. Watching them open their stockings my sister and I so happily fill for Christmas brings us the same joy I am sure they enjoy now and, in the past, watching us do the same. Counseling them on life decisions and helping them as they go through the challenges that life is now presenting them with – it's an honor and privilege rooted in a family structure built on love that they cultivated and nurtured.

And look at what our Holy Family went through some two thousand years ago. Mary accepting God's gift of Jesus so willingly. Whatever dreams, aspirations, and plans she had for her life up to that point were gone in order to bring her baby, Jesus, into the world. The fact is

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she most likely did not even think she would survive as her being with child outside of marriage was a capital offense. But she listened to God and believed with such faith that God would not lead here unto destruction. So is the case for Joseph as he was visited by God, in his dreams, to keep Marry at his side and love her and the pending baby. He left his carpentry business behind when they traveled to Bethlehem where he had to start all over to support a new family. Then another God-dream and another shuttered business as they fled for their lives as refugees into Egypt as illegal immigrants. Another fresh start in Egypt eventually lead to another God-dream a few years later just as things were most likely picking up and again Joseph had to leave it all behind to travel back home, but this time not his home but another (Nazareth) where he knew no one to help him in order to protect his family. The extreme love, devotion, and sacrifice that Marry and Joseph exhibited in order to protect and provide for their son Jesus is an extreme even when applied to today's society. An regardless of any doubts or complaints they may have shared with each other, their actions are a beacon of family love for all ages.

So, our scriptures give us great words of wisdom coupled with extreme acts of sacrifice and love to emulate and use as guides in our lives. They remind us that we are to love and honor, as equal, our spouses and love and cherish our children. As children we are to do the same to their parents and extend care to them in their later years. We must keep Jesus central in our family lives to guide us with this wisdom and to be our referee when we don't always get it right and find ourselves in dispute with those we love.

As we have grown in the wisdom of God and we continually expand our understanding of love that the Bible shows and us we also begin to realize that there are many more family units that rightfully exist in the world today. We have our nuclear family unit that can exist with only one parent, both mother and father, or two moms or two dads. The same family units may also be led by grandparents or foster parents that, just as equally, care and love for their children. God's examples of love for all people so properly tie into the love we must all cherish and protect in our family units. This protection extends to a the global family as we are all our neighbor's keeper and thus hold responsibility to help families, extended families, and families in the sense of friends, work circles, faith circles, national and the world, to live and grow in respect, love, and unity with each other.

When we keep Jesus centered in our lives and when we let Jesus be our guide to conflict and keep his teachings of love and honor in our hearts we are rewarded with fruitful lives. And regardless to what groups you call family, your age, or any other qualifier, may we all look to the extreme devotion to God and love for each other the Holy Family had as a guide for us all to live by. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, pray for us! AMEN.

---Citations---

The New American Bible: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010

ISBN 9780529064844