

## **From Our Parents**

The Holy Family (Year A)

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A retired priest I know had an interesting comment looking back on his life. He entered seminary in the 1950s, received a very solid religious education, joined the clerical ranks, and became a bright theologian. His comment: 'I learned more about being a priest from my parents than from my 8 years of formal education in the seminary.'

Seminary formation has a reputation for being intellectually rigorous, traditional, philosophical, and thorough. There is a strong emphasis on Ancient Philosophy (like Plato and Aristotle) and the Middle Ages (like St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure). The Catholic seminary might be one of the few remaining institutions who are so concerned with the interaction between the Christian faith and philosophical reason. On top of the intellectual dimension, there is also the spiritual dimension of the seminary. This involves long periods of prayer, practicing self-discipline, learning our traditional devotions, and, most importantly, growing in our relationship with God. Yet, after all of this, this priest could say, 'I learned more about being a priest from my parents than from my 8 years of formal education in the seminary.'

For as thorough as his seminary education was, he was able to reflect back on his family and home life. He noted that from his father he learned tolerance, understanding, openness, and forgiveness and from his mother he learned acceptance of whatever life throws at you. These qualities are the ones that served him well throughout his priestly ministry.

Today's feast is the Feast of the Holy Family. Jesus was formed as a human being through his parents, Mary and Joseph, in their home. Judging from the fact that Jesus would eventually preach the beatitudes, teach us to love our enemies, and be willing to sacrifice himself so that others might live, I think Mary and Joseph did an excellent job in raising their son. They certainly had a healthy home life.

A parent has the honor of profoundly influencing their child. A parent's outlook, perspective, and love are big factors in their development. As the book of Sirach said in the first reading, "God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons." Still today, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that the parent(s) are the primary educators of their children and that not even a Catholic school can replace that responsibility.

Some of those here, of course, may not have had a healthy home life and may not be able to appreciate this emphasis on learning from one's parents and one's home life. That's fair. But even in difficult or hurtful environments, once removed from them, we can look back and still learn something about life from our home life.

*Our homes can be the place where we learn more about life than in any subsequent educational institution.*

*Do I take my responsibility to form a healthy home life seriously?*

I know we are all busy and family structures have changed. But as Pope Francis said in his introduction to his document *The Joy of Love*, "it is my hope that, in reading this text, all will feel called to love and cherish family life, for 'families are not a problem; they are first and foremost an opportunity.'" (*The Joy of Love*, 7)