

Growing Our Family

Holy Family (Year B)

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We have been talking a lot about sickness and death recently due to the pandemic. This has made all of us anxious and afraid. But what we haven't talked much about are the many people currently expecting a baby, including in our own Church and School. These mothers and fathers are growing their families. In doing so, they can help lift up our spirits as they prepare to bring a newborn into the world. Soon after, many of them will bring these newborn infants into the Church to have them baptized. For the sake of these children and their excited parents, we must keep working to create a better future.

In today's Feast of the Holy Family, we recall Mary and Joseph going through the excitement of growing their family. On Christmas, their son, Jesus, was born in Bethlehem. In today's Gospel account, we hear the story of them taking their newborn baby to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate him to God in order to fulfill their religious practices.

A newborn baby can give us hope for the future in a profound way. Even if our lives are half way over or mostly complete, we see them just beginning on their journey of life. In today's Gospel, both Simeon and Anna, two elderly people, became excited to see the baby Jesus. Simply meeting the savior as an infant- long before his ministry, passion, death, and resurrection- was enough to give them peace of mind. They said good things about him to all who were listening. Simeon even says to God, 'now you may let me depart in peace, for my

own eyes have seen the salvation you have prepared in sight of all the peoples.'

This is not to say that growing one's family is an easy decision or without hardships. The righteous and devout man Simeon in the Gospel predicted that 'a sword will pierce Mary's heart so that the hearts of many may be revealed,' a reference to her having to watch the passion and death of her son some 30 years later. Nonetheless, in today's Gospel, Mary and Joseph are affirmed in their willingness to bring Jesus into the world and to grow their family.

Our families are very important because they are our first introduction to life. Whether we come into this world in a traditional or non-traditional family, those early years shape us as children and form us as future adults. Thus, in his 1981 document on the family, Pope John Paul II said, "the future of humanity passes by way of the family." Young parents and soon to be parents have a great responsibility and a great blessing ahead of them.

Seeing people grow their families should give us hope for the future.

Am I looking not only to the deaths in our world, but also to the births?

Like a biological family, we want to grow our Church family, too. We rely on the wisdom of the Simeon's and Anna's of our community, the openness to life of the Mary's and Joseph's of our community, and the signs of hope for the future in the baby Jesus' of our community. On this feast of the Holy Family, may we share in the excitement of those who are growing our family.