

Family life is rooted in the unconditional love of God (Ordo). Jesus needed loving parents to help teach him how to speak, how to walk, how to pray and how to relate to others in the village. Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family who give witness to God's love.

God blesses all life and he calls on the faith of parents to help their children grow in love, respect, and holiness. When a family presents their child to the church for Baptism, we remind them that they are the primary teachers of the faith to their newborn. They are the first to witness to the Gospel to their child. As that infant matures into a young child and beyond... parents are called to bring him or her, through a progressive education to full human and Christian maturity. (Familiaris Consortio 1).

We are not issued a theology degree with the birth of a child. The responsibility of caring for a child calls for growth in a parent as they relate to God, their spouse, and their children. How is this possible? There is no owner's manual that comes with the birth of a child. There is love, hard work, sacrifice and prayer.

Let me share some poetic thoughts from my father. As a son, a father, and a grandparent, he wanted to share his hopes and dreams on how others could work at becoming holy families.

If I could have my wishes come true,  
What would a loving parent wish for you?  
First, I'd wish you lasting health,  
For that would be your greatest wealth.

Be a follower of the Golden Rule...  
At home, at work, at play or school.  
I wish you good humor, happiness, and wit –  
And the fortitude to never quit.

I wish that you stand tall and proud...  
to follow your instincts and not the crowd.  
I wish that as you daily trod, -  
Remember that you're a child of God!

We look to the Holy Family for guidance in making the right decisions along the way. With the help of Providence, one may also look to a loving mother or father for guidance as well. It is helpful to ponder what God asks of a mother.

God needed helpers ... it is wisely stated  
That is why mothers were created.  
Indeed, they are the answer to a child's prayer  
The Guardian Angels of mercy and care.

Through the storms of life, regardless of the weather  
She's the bond that holds the family together.  
Forever on duty to resolve each call  
She faces each challenge winter, spring, summer, & fall.

When the years have told their greatest story  
Of souls who are destined for ultimate glory  
It will be the finest story ever told  
Of loving mothers with hearts of gold.

Likewise, God asks loving fathers to help nurture their children.

Like Joseph the Carpenter, a father teaches his children to help others.  
Be obedient to your mother, help your sisters and brothers.  
Always do the best that you can, one of many steps to becoming a man,  
It is part of a creed – to help others in need ...

In our joyous – but oftentimes much saddened life  
We experience great heights and times of great strife.  
When for certain we fail, the fall is softened with a father's care  
He doesn't need to have all the answers, he just needs to be there.

Within a Father's love we find: the key to enrich the heart, the soul, the mind.  
Wealth does not fall out of the sky from above  
The greatest treasure \_\_ beyond all measure  
Is the treasure we find in a Father's love!

Sirach counsels, "Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and preserves himself from them. When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard" (Sir 3:3-5).

Whatever our visions, meek or bold \_\_  
We know not what the future will hold.  
That is why we must be keenly aware  
Of taking our cares to the Lord in prayer.

Counting our blessings can be that start  
Of adding serenity to a troubled heart.  
When actions and deeds give peace of mind  
Such gifts benefit all of humankind.

Each helping hand becomes a worthy measure  
In offering our time, our talents, and our treasure.  
The greatest reward on what a prayer is worth  
Is when we see its fruits ... peace on Earth.

When "the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, [Simeon] took him into his arms and blessed God" (Lk 2:27-28). Let me close with a blessing for you and your family:

We bless your name, O Lord, for sending your own incarnate Son, to become part of a family, so that, as he lived its life, he would experience its worries and its joys. We ask you, Lord, to protect and watch over every family, so that in the strength of your grace its members may enjoy prosperity, possess the priceless gift of your peace, and, as the Church alive in the home, bear witness in this world to your glory. We ask this thought Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers