

In the shining example of the Holy Family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus, we see the virtue of family life, and the bonds of charity. We pray that we may learn from their example and bring that same joy into our own homes.

Jesus shows us to place our relationship with God at the center of our lives. Amidst the teachers in the temple, he displays his own wisdom and understanding. Practice of the faith is also central to the lives of Joseph and Mary. Each year, they observe the Passover by making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Passover celebrates the liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. God is at the center of family life and their liturgical presence in the temple takes place above all else. Jesus has liberated us from slavery to sin. Each Sunday, we have the obligation to give our thanks to God and to faithfully observe his Passover from death to new life.

There are many hurts and misunderstandings in the family. Mary is quick to express her concerns to Jesus. “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (Lk 2:48). Notwithstanding the very good reason for Jesus to stay in the temple, he returns to Nazareth with his parents and was “obedient to them.” The practice of obedience helps us to be humbler, to acknowledge the needs of others, and ultimately to lay aside our own will for God’s. This is what Jesus teaches us when he willingly lays down his life on the cross in obedience to God the Father and for the sake of our salvation.

We see obedience to the will of God in Mary’s ‘yes’ at the annunciation. “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). We see obedience to the will of God in Joseph’s decision to trust in the angel and set aside his plans to divorce Mary based on fear and misunderstanding. “When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home” (Mt 1:24). The Book of Sirach also offers us practical advice for being obedient to the will of God. “By showing ... respect especially to old and infirm parents, the sins of children are pardoned.”

There are often many hurts and misunderstandings in the family. “No family is without its steady dose of disappointments and trials.”<sup>ii</sup> Unresolved issues from childhood can last for a lifetime. In our Gospel, we find Jesus sitting and asking questions in the temple. Sometimes we need to sit quietly and ask God for the wisdom we need to guide children, to forgive hurts, to look for the good and find ways to build the family up.

Pope Francis puts it quite simply. In the family be quick to say: ‘please, thank you and I am sorry:’

- PLEASE - “To enter into the life of another person, even when that person forms part of our life, requires the delicacy of [a please] a non-intrusive attitude, that renews trust and respect. Confidence, then, does not authorize us to take everything for granted. Love, the more intimate and profound it is, the more it demands respect for freedom and the capacity to wait for the **other** to open the door of his or her heart.”
- THANK YOU – It may seem like a simple phrase of politeness, but thank you helps to build trust. We begin in the family, and we move on to the wider world helping to restore a sense of civility to our impatient world.
- Saying “I am sorry” over small things helps to prevent small cracks from becoming bigger. “If we are not capable of apologizing, it means we are not capable of forgiveness either. ... Many hurt feelings, many lesions in the family begin with the loss of those precious words: ‘I am sorry’. In married life there are many arguments ... but I advise you never to let the day end without making peace. And for this, a small gesture is enough.”<sup>iii</sup>

“When family members pray together, engage in lifelong learning, forgive one another, serve each other, welcome others, affirm and celebrate life, and bring justice and mercy to the

community, they help each other live the faith and grow in faith.” You may not understand the important role you play in helping one another to grow in holiness. Perhaps you fear your family is too fragile to be used for the Lord’s purposes. Please “remember that a family is holy not because it is perfect, but because God’s grace is at work in it.”<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> US Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 28.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.orlandodiocese.org/the-three-key-words-of-the-family-please-thank-you-sorry/>

<sup>iii</sup> US Catholic Catechism for Adults, Chapter 28.