

Homily – Luke 2: 41- 52

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

26th December 2021

Family is where life begins and love never ends.

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. And this feast reminds us that Jesus chose to live in an ordinary human family in order to reveal God's plan to make all people live as one "holy family" in His Church.

Now, in today's Gospel, Luke describes how Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem at the age of twelve to make him "a son of the Law" so that he might take on the obligations of the Mosaic Law. After telling us how the boy Jesus disappeared on the journey home and was found only three days later in the Temple, the Gospel explains how the Holy Family of Nazareth lived according to the will of God. They themselves obeyed all the Jewish laws and regulations, and brought Jesus up, in the same way, so that he grew in wisdom and in the favor of God and people.

Well! We don't choose our family. They are God's gifts to us and what matters in life is not how big the house is, but how happy the home is where everyone would

truly love, share and care, and where no one would feel left out.

Once in an audience, Pope Paul VI told ‘how one day’, when he was the Archbishop of Milan, he went out on a parish visitation. During the course of the visitation, he found an old woman living alone. “How are you?” he asked her. “Not bad,” she answered. “I have enough food, and I’m not suffering from the cold.” “You must be reasonably happy then?” he said. “No, I’m not,” she softly responded and then, she started to cry. “You see, ‘my son and daughter-in-law’ never come to see me. I am dying of loneliness.” Paul VI was haunted by this phrase “I’m dying of loneliness.” And he concluded: “Food and warmth are not enough in themselves. People need something more. They need our presence, our time, and our love. They need to be touched, to be reassured that they are not forgotten.”

Though, Jesus got left behind as Mary and Joseph set out on their return journey, he was never alone. Jesus wasn’t utterly lost. He had a happy home. He had two people who cared deeply about him and to whom he was very important and precious.

But now, the question that all of us need to ask ourselves on this feast day is this: “Do we always treat ‘our Family’ as God’s greatest masterpiece? Have we ever broken the hearts of our parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses and friends who give their very life for us?”

Well! Jake’s Mom Stella had only one eye. So, for Jake Stella was such an embarrassment that he hated her. One day, Stella came to his school to see her son. And Jake felt so awkward and uncomfortable at her visit that he ignored her, threw her a hateful look and ran out. Next day at the school, one of his classmates said: “Eee, your mom has only one eye”. Jake wanted to bury himself and wished his mom to just disappear. And that day, he confronted her and told her: “If you’re only gonna make me a laughing stock, why don’t you just die?”. Stella did not respond. And Jake didn’t even stop to think for a second about what he had said. He was oblivious to her feelings. He wanted to be out of that house having nothing to do with her. So, he really studied hard and finally got a chance to go abroad for higher studies. Eventually, he got married, had kids and bought a house of his own.

Jake now was happy with his life, kids and the comforts. Then one day, his mom came to visit him.

She hadn't seen him in years and she never even had met her grandchildren. When she stood by the door, Jake's children laughed at her, and yelled at her for coming over uninvited. Jake even screamed at her at the top of his lungs: "How dare you come to my house and scare my children? Get out of here, now!". And to this, his mom quietly answered: "Oh, I am sorry. May have gotten the wrong address" And she disappeared out of sight.

Now, a few years later, a letter regarding a school reunion came to his house. So, he lied to his wife that he was going on a business trip and then started for the reunion at the school in his native village. After the reunion, he went to the old shack just out of curiosity, but found it vacant. Stella's good neighbours came to him and said that his Mom had died a month ago and then, they handed him a letter that she wanted him to have.

Jake now opened the letter, and tears were rolling down his cheeks as he began to read it:

My dearest son,

I think of you all the time. I am sorry that I came to your house and scared your children. I was so glad when I heard you were coming for the reunion. But I

may not be able to even get out of bed to see you. I am sorry that I was a constant embarrassment to you when you were growing up. You see, when you were very little, you got into an accident and lost one of your eyes. As a mother I couldn't stand watching you having to grow up with one eye. So, I gave you mine and I was proud of my son who was seeing a whole new world for me in my place with that eye.

With all my love for you,

Your Mom Stella.

Jake's world was shattered at thought that he had hated the person who lived only for him. He was in tears, and had no clue now, how to make up for his worst deeds.

Well! Dear friends, 'the Lord does not call us to have perfect families. But He calls us to create Holy Families'. When we take time to pause and see what true and real love looks like, when we consistently love each other with patience and mercy, when we are able to look at the heart that loves us than the face that fades, then we are learning to be holy. And that is how Christ loves us and that is what matters most.

On this feast of the Holy Family, let us resolve then to respect our parents who gave us life, who raised us better than they had been, our spouses who spend their life for us, our friends who are always there for us in time of need expecting nothing in return, our siblings who make us smile when we are sad, and our neighbours who always care for us. There is no way to repay what they have done for us. All we can do is to give them what they need. And that is, just ‘our time, our love and our respect’.

God bless you all, **Amen.**