

HOMILY ~ THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH DECEMBER 30/31, 2023

When I was growing up, my dad got home from work around 5:45 pm. My sisters and I knew that we had better be home and ready for dinner then. We gathered for dinner as a family, we spoke of the day's events, and if the phone rang, we let it ring! This was family time.

Sunday morning was also a family day. We went to 8:00 am Mass and celebrated **AT THE TABLE** of the Lord, came home had some breakfast, **AT THE TABLE**, and after we began either working in the yard with dad, or helping mom get Sunday dinner ready. Sunday was also the day when aunts, uncles and cousins would stop to visit. There was always a little extra food just in case relatives stopped by at dinnertime.

Today is the Feast of the Holy Family. In Scripture, we do not get too much detail as to how Mary, Joseph and Jesus lived. One could imagine it was much the same. Go to the Temple and hear God's word, and then come home and eat before you went on with the day's chores. I would bet that dinner was a gathering of family and relatives gathered around the table sharing stories of the week and resting in the Lord's presence. Making the Sabbath Day Holy!

Today we live in a fast-paced world. Some parents work more than one job to make ends meet. It is so easy to get lost in our day-to-day living. When that happens, we may neglect the family while we work to provide for them.

Some of us can remember a song by Harry Chapin, recorded many years ago, 1974 to be exact. It was called, "*The Cat's in the Cradle.*" It was a ballad about the relationship between a father and son. The father spent his time and energy making a successful living. The son kept asking for his attention, to be able to share his father's life. "***When you coming home, Dad?***" The son would repeatedly ask only to receive the reply, "***I don't know when, but we will get together then.***" As the

boy grew up and the father grew wiser, he began to pose the same question to his son, ***“When you coming home, son?”*** Only to receive the sadly predictable reply, ***“I don’t know, Dad, but we will get together then.”***

A friend of mine has a daughter who is a lawyer. She lives a considerable distance from him. Months had passed since he had seen her. He is not a well man, and every day is precious. He called to ask when she might visit. The daughter detailed a list of reasons that prevented her from taking the time to see him, her court schedule, meetings, new clients, research etc.

At the end of the recitation, the father asked, ***“When I die, do you intend to come to my funeral?”*** The daughter’s response was immediate. ***“Dad, I cannot believe you would ask that. Of course I will come!”*** To which the father replied, ***“Good! Forget the funeral and come now. I need you more now than I will then.”*** St. Paul gives us a blueprint for family life. He knows that life is not easy, particularly in families. Sometimes we are too close to the people we love to avoid cross words and hurt feelings. The last few years have been tough on families.

As we enter a new year, take St. Paul’s words as a blueprint for family life: clothe yourselves with **heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bear with one another, forgive as the Lord has forgiven you and over all these virtues, put on love!** Make that call to that loved one; invite them to break bread at the table! If you need strength to do this, come to the LORD’s table! Remember the song, *“The Cat’s in the Cradle ... we will get together then ...”* **“Then”** may never come. **Do it now!**

Peace,

Deacon Don