

# HOMILY ~ THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY & JOSEPH

## DECEMBER 28/29, 2024

A woman was sitting on her front porch when a young boy from the neighborhood came furiously riding down the sidewalk on his tricycle. He passed her house, went to the corner of the block, turned the corner and was out of sight. A few moments later, he turned the corner at the other end of the block and rode again past her house as fast as he could. This happened several times. Finally, as he was passing the house yet again, the woman called out, "**Tommy, where are you riding to in such a rush?**"

The boy answered, "**I am running away from home. My family hates me.**"

"**I see,**" said the woman. "**But, if you are running away from home, why do you keep riding around the block?**"

Turning the corner again, the boy called back, "**My mom won't let me cross the street by myself.**"

**Family: You can't live with them, and you can't live without them.** That is just the way that it is. If I were to ask you, who are the people you love most in life, the answer would often be family. If I were to ask you, who has hurt you most in your life, family could also be the answer. The people in our family are the people who we care for and are proud of. They are also the people who worry us and disappoint us. It is clear that family is a mixed bag.

This is also true of the Holy Family. Even though we tend to idealize Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—picturing them the way that they appear on holy cards—today's Gospel makes clear that they had their moments. In this visit to Jerusalem at Passover when Jesus remains behind, the Holy Family fails to communicate with one another, misunderstands and hurts one another. Mary says to Jesus, "**Son, why**

*have you done this to us?"* Jesus answers, ***"It's not my problem. You should have known."*** That is rather typical of a family argument. The important thing about this story is what happens after the argument. The text tells us that Jesus went down with them, came to Nazareth and remained obedient to them. In other words, Jesus learned something from living in his family. We easily imagine that Jesus learned from Joseph and Mary how to pray and love. It is also true that Jesus learned how to bite his lip and forgive.

The same is true for us. We learn in our families how to love and serve others. We also learn how to adjust and to say we are sorry. Instead of setting up some idealized picture of family that makes us feel guilty every time we argue or hurt one another, it might be better to see family as a place to learn: a place to learn how to live. In family, we learn what is easy and joyful. We also learn what is difficult and painful. All of this is what makes family important.

Years ago, Pope Francis gave an address on the family. In that address, he said, ***"In family, sometimes the plates fly. But after the storm has passed, it is time to work things out."*** We should not be discouraged if the plates fly in our family. It is all part of the learning. We should just recommit ourselves to work things out.

Peace,

Deacon Don