

Deacon Bob Corsaro  
Holy Family Sunday Homily  
12-28-2008

Sirach 3:2-6,12-14; Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40  
(Wife Sue Corsaro Assisted in red)

I would like to introduce to you...my wife Suzan. Now some of you may be sitting there thinking, wow Deacon Bob sure did marry a woman much younger than him. BUT honestly there is only 2 years difference. I hear this all the time!

Recently Sue and I went to an antique auction. Sue wanted me to bid on a painting of a sailboat. So I did, and won the auction. Afterwards we walked up to the auctioneer, I paid him, he handed the painting to me, and I handed it to Sue saying, "Here you go sweetheart."

The auctioneer responded, "Gee, it sure is nice of you to buy this for your daughter."

Now Sue, being the good Christian woman she is, I figured she would set him straight.

So she looked at him, and then looked directly at me and said, "Yes, Thank You Daddy!"

Today, we have a great opportunity for contemplation, as our church celebrates Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the holy family.

**Last Sunday, and on Christmas day, the Gospel readings offered us extraordinary stories about Joseph and Mary.**

When confronted with extremely difficult challenges both responded in ways teaching us that their faith was not something they practiced only on the Sabbath but, instead, provided the foundation upon which both made their decisions.

While Mary could have said “No” to the angel Gabriel’s message, she instead offered herself to God saying, “May it be done to me according to your word.”

And Joseph, finding out Mary was pregnant with someone else’s child, he could have subjected her to the law for her alleged infidelity, which may have led to her being stoned to death or he could quietly divorce her.

But, instead, Joseph listened to the angel appearing in a dream and decided to take Mary to be his wife and to raise Jesus as his son.

We see that what is so special about this family’s holiness is that it was predicated not upon Jesus, God’s incarnate Son, but upon how Joseph and Mary responded to God in their lives.

And as we read these scriptures, we come to realize that the Holy family’s lives, were not by any means an easy walk in the park.

Believe it or not, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were just as busy as husbands, wives, and children are today.

They didn’t have email and instant messages to answer or cell phones ringing at every hour of the day and night. But they did have to make and do almost everything by hand.

So...What do you say we drop in, pay the Holy family a visit, take a closer look at what the day to day life may have looked like for Joseph, Mary and the Baby Jesus.

Each day, someone—probably Mary—had to make bread because there were no preservatives to keep baked goods fresh for more than one day.

They couldn't hop in their car and drive to Wegmans to pick up a loaf of bread, but if they could I imagine it would have been Monks bread.

Instead, one of them had to walk or take the donkey to the marketplace to purchase whole grain. Then, after bringing the grain home, one of them would grind the grain and sift out the flour.

But, before anyone could make the dough somebody would have to draw water from the well located in the center of the town so that the water could be mixed with the flour and kneaded into dough.

And, since there were no ovens, the dough had to be baked in an open hearth. But, if there was going to be a fire to bake the dough, someone had to go out and cut, gather, and prepare kindling and logs for burning in the hearth.

And Each week there were the ordinary jobs and responsibilities that had to be completed so that the bills could be paid and food put on the table.

And looking further to Jesus humanness, how did he come to know about the lives of the shepherds, seasons and harvest, seeds and growing, lilies of the field, birds in the air and building nests..... can you see Joseph taking him by the hand and showing him and teaching him these things?

Did Joseph remove splinters from Jesus' hands as Jesus learned the trade of a carpenter? What did Mary's young face look like as her hungry husband and son came in their home after a hard days work, and happily ate the meal she cooked for them. The bread she made with her own hands? Can you see the smile on her face as she watched them eat?

What if one of them became ill? Couldn't get out of bed, with a fever? Imagine the turmoil that would have occurred in their day to day routine. Not to mention, playing catch up.

As you can see, Our familiarity with the scriptures can provide an excellent opportunity to reflect on and relate to the humanness of Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus.

The scriptures show us the major challenges the Holy family were faced with.....challenges largely presented by the culture they lived in.

What about the challenges we face as part of our own human condition, Our family dynamics, the distractions in our daily lives?

**Worries about retirement and the stock market's dramatic fluctuations. Pressured decisions to buy or sell. Caring for and supporting our own families, our children,..Employment insecurities, clashes of personalities within families. Summoning up patience and forgiveness for others. Coping with Illness, aging and failing parents...we all get caught up in it dont we?**

Sometimes its becomes very hard to see the grace of God in our daily lives.. doesn't it?

It's so important for us to realize that the Holy Family wasn't a separate unit unto itself, protected in a cocoon from the joys and sorrows of the world.

What was it that kept Mary and Joseph close to each other. What bonded them so strongly in their early relationship together? What was it that helped them cope against the extreme odds against them? What helped them to realize the grace of God in their lives?

**Their Faith.**

Some may think that the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph was special because of Jesus and, for that reason, is revered by the Church as “The Holy Family.”

Certainly, having the Son of God as a member of this family makes it different from all other families in human history.

But, the Gospel of Luke reminds us, Jesus was not what made this family “The Holy Family.”

As busy as Joseph and Mary were and as busy as we are, today's scripture reminds us that a family's holiness is wholly dependent upon mothers and fathers who individually and collectively give the highest priority to their faith.

It's clear that the Holy Spirit was indeed alive and well within the dynamics of the Holy Family. Their strong faith is an excellent model for us and our families.

Today's Gospel speaks of Mary and Joseph's faith, and their firm adherence to the law of Moses.

They subscribed to the letter of the Law of Moses, observing the ancient ceremonies of circumcision, redemption of the first born, purification and presentation.

Mary and Joseph bring their baby to God.

We, as Christians, do this today. As Jesus instructed, “let the children come to me.” We bring our children to Jesus in the sacrament of Baptism.

Our children, part of our own family, now become a member of a much larger family, The Body of Christ. In the saving waters of baptism, our children are bathed in grace.

God poured out Gods self, to share in our humanity to become one of us.

Born of the Virgin Mary, becoming a vulnerable, helpless infant, completely, utterly dependant on two human beings..Mary and Joseph.

Joseph and Mary, fully human, as we are, were vulnerable as we are.

Isnt it interesting how the scriptures often present such vulnerable ones as models of faith for the rest of us ?

Christmas eve morning, Bob baptized the grandchild of a very close friends of ours.

You could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit during the ceremony.

At the end of the ceremony, as I was standing next to our friend, the grandfather, he was looking around the church at all of his friends and family, and simply said....it doesn't get any better than this.

As we come forward today to receive the body of Christ, Let us Give thanks, and reflect for a moment on the grace of God, received through our faith.