

DEC 26: HOMILY ON THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY- 2010

(Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14, Colossians 3:12-21, Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23).

In an audience Pope Paul VI told how one day, when he was Archbishop of Milan, he went out on 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 said as she started to cry. 'You see, my son and daughter-in-law never come to see me. I'm dying of loneliness.' Afterwards he was haunted by the phrase 'I'm dying of loneliness'. And the Pope concluded: 'Food and warmth are not enough in themselves. People need something more. They need our presence, our time, our love. They need to be touched, to be reassured that they are not forgotten.' (Flor McCarthy in 'New Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies')

On the last Sunday of the year, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. We are here to offer our own families and all the members on the altar for God's blessing. The first reading is a commentary on the fourth commandment: 'Honor your father and your mother.' Paul in the letter to the Colossians in the second reading advises us that we should put on love and remain thankful in our relationships with one another. Today's gospel describes how Joseph and Mary protected the Child Jesus from the sword of King Herod by escaping with him to Egypt.

By celebrating the Sunday following Christmas as the Feast of the Holy Family, the Church encourages us to look to the Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph for inspiration, example and encouragement. They were a model family in which both parents worked hard, helped each other, understood and accepted each other, and took good care of their Child so that He might grow up not only in human knowledge but also as a Child of God. Jesus brought holiness to the family of Joseph and Mary as Jesus brings us holiness by embracing us in His family. Holy Family teaches that happy family life depends on the intensity of love, the exercise and respect for authority and hard work.

Let us pray for the grace of caring for one another in our own families, for each member of the parish family, and for all families of the universal Church. May God bless all your families in the New Year.