

December 31, 2017

Feast of the Holy Family

Lord, teach us the sanctity of human love!

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalms 128:1-5

Colossians 3:12-21

Luke 2:22-40

In the first reading the wisdom of Sirach gives children important guiding principles in treating parents. Honor them, comfort them, be considerate, kind, and act always with reverence towards them. This will bring long life and the joy to the children and their prayers will be heard.

The Psalmist emphasizes walking in the ways of the Lord and fear of Him. This brings blessings, happiness, and even prosperity and wives will be fruitful and children sturdy as olive plants and all will be blessed.

In the second reading Paul identifies the faithful as holy and beloved who are to clothe themselves with mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, while in wisdom they are to teach and even admonish one another when necessary. They are to forgive grievances, bear with one another, cultivate peace in their hearts and act always in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him. Adding love to all of this brings perfection.

The Gospel tells us how Joseph and Mary took the infant to the temple in Jerusalem for his presentation to the Lord. Simeon, a righteous and devout man and the Holy Spirit revealed to him that he would see the Christ of the Lord before death and he recognized this child as the One sent. The prophetess, Anna, was also there and she spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the expected redemption.

The Father is the source of unimaginable power,
Yet the Son was sent as a helpless infant;
The Holy Spirit motivated Simeon and Anna to prophecy.

All that was prophesied for the Messiah came to pass and the holy family received the guidance and protection they needed so that Jesus would have a safe place to grow up. Now we have love and forgiveness from Him and are asked to let peace reign in our hearts. Let us be forgiving of all grievances and put the perfection of love to work in all of your acts.

Jesus grew up in a good home with a father who was a carpenter but the unexpected death of his father brought him the responsibility of supporting a widowed mother. In his early years he learned a trade making furniture, farm tools, building foundations and houses. He later used the vocabulary of his trade in creative ways: Peter was referred to as rock, someone who would serve as part of the new foundation for the Way; he knew the difference between a sliver and a plank; he understood the results of building a foundation on sand or on stone. He probably worked occasionally in a group and experienced an inconsiderate employer as well as shirking workmen. In his own shop he experienced the oriental keenness for an advantageous bargain; or with those who made contracts for building endeavors and later found out they did not have the necessary resources to finish the job.

In traveling the hills surrounding Nazareth he experienced nature, the beauty of wild flowers, probably encountered a dead sparrow on some path, saw planted seed withering in weeds or trampled on a path, and was able to associate these things with a God who is powerful, compassionate and personal to the wonders of His creation.

How do we view our experiences?

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