



It is so fitting that we celebrate the Solemnity of the Holy Family on the first Sunday after Christmas. It forever reminds us of the wonderful, mind-boggling, truth that God chose to be born and raised as a member of a real human family. Jesus himself depended on his mother and father to help him learn his prayers and grow in wisdom and grace. It would be impossible to overestimate the importance of family life, after all, God through the example of Jesus has put his eternal seal of approval on it! By God's design, marriage has been established as an exclusive and permanent sacramental covenant between one man and one woman in which the couple enjoy a profound personal unity of body, heart, and soul which is open to fertility. As the fruit of this profound unity children are conceived and learn from their parents and siblings in an atmosphere of love and devotion the true meaning of life and how to love God and neighbor as Jesus taught us.

Unfortunately, in our day, the family and family life is under severe attack by what John Paul II called the "culture of death." Like it or not, we are all affected, or should I say "infected" to some degree by this culture of death in which we are immersed. It is a constant battle for us to oppose our culture and follow the eternal truths of the Gospel which are at times demanding and diametrically opposed to all forms of selfishness. How can we

learn to sacrifice ourselves for others without complaint—nay, even with joy? How can we understand in a practical way the truths that Jesus taught us: "the greatest among you will be the servant to all"; "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; "What you do to the least you do to me"; "every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart"; etc.? It is impossible to fully live these truths unless our lives are profoundly rooted in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mother Teresa rightly placed a great deal of emphasis on family life as the source and school of love. On the Feast of the Holy Family, let us try to humbly listen to the words of a modern-day Saint, Mother Teresa of Calcutta:

"Where does love begin? At home. Let us learn to love in our family. In our own family we may have very poor people and we do not notice them. We have no time to smile, no time to talk to each other. Let us bring that love that tenderness into our own home and you will see the difference.

"Make your house, your family, another Nazareth where love, peace, joy and unity reign, for love begins at home. You must start there and make your home the center of burning love. You must be the hope of eternal happiness to your wife, your husband, your child, to your grandfather, grandmother, to whoever is connected with you.

"I think the world today is upside down, and is suffering so much, because there is so very little love in the homes and in family life. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other; there is no time to enjoy each other. If we could only bring back into our lives the life that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived in Nazareth, if we could make our homes another Nazareth, I think that peace and joy would reign in the world."

I think Mother Teresa in her simplicity is profoundly right! May the Good Lord help us to see the eternal beauty of the Holy Family and give us the grace to foster true love in our own families: the love that takes time to notice the needs of others, to be tender, forgiving, and quick to sacrifice. I know, easier said than done, but at the end of the day, can you think of anything more worthy to pray and fight for? Happy Feast Day!!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples