

Dear brothers and sisters,

"Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways" (Psalm 128:1). This is the marvelous example the Holy Family gives to the world.

The fear of the Lord makes the human family holy, happy, a domestic Church and a window to heaven. The fear in question is filial fear. It means love and attentiveness to the Lord. The very first Psalm conveyed this message eloquently; "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked ... nor sit in the company with scorners. Rather the law of the Lord is his joy" (Psalm 1:1-3).

How is this true? It is true because God, who made us, redeemed us, and sanctified us is the secret of our peace, our happiness and our holiness. To follow him is to unlock this secret and immerse ourselves in the benevolent ocean of God's light, happiness and holiness. It is to be awash in God's blessedness.

Our families need God so much! "All were created through him; all were created for him. He is before all things, and in him all things together"(Colossians 1:16).

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph gives us an example of a family that follows God. Pope Francis noted that the family of Nazareth is holy because it is centered on Jesus. Mary and Joseph listened to God, loved and respected one another. Mary never griped at Joseph nor Joseph at Mary. Their attentiveness to God made the miracle of God taking on flesh possible. Mary accepted to be the Mother of Christ. Joseph on his part, protected and supported Mary. He did not act impatiently or impetuously. He did not expose Mary to shame or to be stoned when he did not yet understand that Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). When the life of the child Jesus was in danger, Joseph and Mary followed God's guidance and saved the life of the baby. They took Jesus to Egypt in Africa, away from Herod the blood thirsty tyrant who sought to kill the child, because he thought that the Child would take power away from him. Joseph and Mary also came back to their city of Nazareth when it was time because they attuned their hearts and ears to God. Through the Angel, God spoke to Joseph in a dream: "Rise, take the child and his mother and go the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead" (Matthew 2:20). Their attentiveness to God caused them to stay away from the territory where Archelaus, Herod's son was reigning. Herod had died.

For his part, the Lord Jesus had taken on flesh to save man in obedience to his Father and our Father. When Jesus grew up and was twelve years old, he showed us a perfect example of love and respect for Joseph and Mary. Once upon a time he went to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. After the festivities he remained in the temple teaching and answering questions. Mary and Joseph thought he had gone home to Nazareth with their relatives. Not finding him when they arrived home, they returned to Jerusalem and found him in the temple. Though it was right for him to be in the temple, which is his heavenly Father's house, he nevertheless went with Joseph and Mary back to Nazareth (Luke 2:51). Remember, that Jesus is true God and knows more than his parents. But his love and respect led him to obey them. Some of our young people may read a book or go to the Church of their friends where there is a lot of music, dancing and fellowship, this may cause them to start thinking that the Catholic Church is not good enough for them. Jesus did not do that.

The big question is how can we make ourselves available, like the Holy Family to God, who is constantly seeking us. The Holy Scriptures gives us a way to make ourselves available for God and the blessings he gives. "Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways" (Psalm 128:1). The fear of the Lord is not to be scared or afraid of him. It is to open our hearts in love to God who loved us first (1 John 4:19).

One way we can do this is to love and honor our parents. The Lord tells us through the book of Sirach, "Those who honor their father atones for sins, they store up riches who respect their mother" (Ben Sira 3:3). Dear brothers and sisters, it might be easy to get angry at our parents or even think that they do not know what is good for us. But it is never the right thing to do. It is only in a rare case of a parent, who is submerged by his weakness that it might be true. Nobody is perfect however. Love and respect bring out what is the best in every person. When one loves one's parents in spite of what one thinks is their shortcoming, the light of God shines and in our world miracles happen. This is true as well, for our relationship with spouses, siblings, friends and co-workers. The key is to "Put on then, as God's chosen ones heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also do" (Colossians 3:12). The summary of it all is to "Let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:15-16). The Holy Family models this for us. The Word of God took flesh and dwelt in it.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Wipe away, Baby Jesus, the tears of children! Embrace the sick and the elderly! Move men to lay down their arms and to draw close in a universal embrace of peace!

Invite the peoples, O merciful Jesus, to tear down the walls created by poverty and unemployment, by ignorance and indifference, by discrimination and intolerance.

It is you, O Divine Child of Bethlehem, who save us, freeing us from sin. It is You who are the true and only Savior, whom humanity often searches for with uncertainty.

God of peace, gift of peace for all of humanity, come to live in the heart of every individual and of every family. Be our peace and our joy! Amen (St John Paul II).