

Holy Family 2018 Homily by Fr. Gabor What makes a family holy?

You can find a lot of advice on the Internet or in books or from friends on how to make your family happy, psychologically functioning, and so on. Even St. Paul in the second reading gives us a few advice: 'be clothed with sincere compassion, in kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins.' However you don't have to be a holy family to be able to do all these. So then what makes a family 'Holy'?

If you read carefully all of today's readings you will notice that they all have a common underlying message: 'Put the love of God first!' That is the first and most important commandment among the Ten Commandments. So put the love of the Holy one as the underlying priority when you relate to family members, including those with whom you don't get on well. It can mean many things in practice: such as praying together; at the end of the day sharing how you experienced God's presence today; going to Church together, caring for each other, etc.

See what the book of Ecclesiasticus says: 'he who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord...' So care and love for parents should not only be an expression of your natural love for them, but also an expression of your love for the heavenly Father. Jewish people respected God in their parents. Again the Ten Commandment says: honour your father and mother.

Then in the second reading Paul makes it even more clear that love of God is what makes a family not just good and happy, but holy as well. He says: 'never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus,' in other words your words and actions should flow from your love relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Through the life of Mary and Joseph we see a few examples of putting the love of God first; for example Joseph doesn't want to take Mary as his wife, because she is with a child who was not from him, but God tells him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, and Joseph surrenders to God's message, and does what He tells him to do.

In today's Gospel we hear about the finding of Jesus in the temple. Remember what Jesus tells his parents when they find him in the temple: Did you not know that I must be busy in my Father's affairs?

Putting love of God first should not lead us to using it as an excuse to neglect each other in our family. How can you love God whom you cannot see and not love your neighbour whom you can see (cf. 1 John 4: 20-21)? This celebration of the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus is a call to sort out our messy family relationships by putting God's commandments to love as our first priority, and call upon the Holy Spirit to fill us with the confidence and wisdom to know how to do that. Don't take for granted anyone in your family, and be happy with having a family, because sadly there are many people in the world who has no one to call as their family.