

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH; Dec. 29th 2024
Sirach 32-6, 12-14; Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:41-52

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Every year on the last Sunday of the year we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. This feast is dedicated to all the families and gives them an opportunity to reflect on their present family life. The Holy Family is set as a role model, for the very reason that it had a rough starting and they attained the holiness by their mutual love, compassion, understanding and consideration for each other. No way can we compare our modern families with that of the Holy Family, as the challenges and struggles of the modern families are totally different in nature. But they can comfort themselves with the fact that the Holy Family too had struggles to the maximum.

In every culture, family is considered to be the very foundation stone of the society. If the families' foundation is shaken the whole society will be shaken. Eventually the very nation will be in danger. No nation can be destroyed by nuclear or biological weapons; rather by the disintegration of family values. So it is the major concerns of the psychologists and sociologists as how to revitalize the family life. These days, to protect your family's mental health and maintaining strong family relationships is a challenge. For, the evil influence of the bad media on our families, especially on the children is far deeper than anything else.

The Family Councilors give, especially to the couples, a few Tips which will help them to have a healthy relationship which will also help them to bring up their children in good mental health.

1. **Do things together.** The couples normally are seen together a lot during the initial stage of their married life. Once they have couple children their focus is changed and they fail to find time together. Slowly they move from each other. There is no particular type of activities you have to be together; walking in a park, sharing a meal, sitting together to watch a show or game, visiting a friend, shopping together, cooking a meal etc. are some of the areas you can be together.
2. **Accept the differences and similarities in you.** The husband should not conclude that his wife is another man and the wife should not treat her husband as another woman. You have biological, physical and tremendous psychological differences in you. Besides them, you come from different family background and traditions. Some of your habits are inherited from your own parental families. Accepting in one's own differences and similarities are fundamental in a healthy relationship. And also you have to respect them.
3. **Strive to understand each other well.** In order to understand better, the communication is the best means. It is the life blood of the relationship. There isn't any particular subject to communicate. Communication can be done through words and gestures. Sometimes, to communicate one's feelings no words are needed.
4. **Choose to feel each other's emotion. "Empathy allows us to spontaneously feel what our partner feels. Empathy may not result in agreement, but it allows us to demonstrate understanding" – John Carlson.**

5. **Mindfully Nurture your Love.** The real love is the very foundation of a good married life. A genuine love for each other doesn't fall from heaven. Where there is no love existing between the couples the devil makes his way to enter their life. **“There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer; No disease that enough love will not heal; No door that enough love will not open; No gulf that enough love will not bridge; No wall that enough love will not throw down; No sin that enough love will not redeem.”** – Emmet Fox. In the married life only full love will survive. If you start with half hearted love, even that half will fall on the way.

6. **Make your married life priority number one.** Before you got married, you belonged to your own families. The parents and siblings were your priority. But after the marriage, your priority is shifted from your families to your married life. No other things should come on the way of your married life. Even children have their place, but no above your married life.

7. **Delight your partner with encouraging words and appreciation; give surprise gifts to your partner on special occasions.**

8. **Consciously balance togetherness and uniqueness.** Remember, you are a unique individual with your own liking and disliking. You are unique. So you need sometime alone, may be with your own personal friends or personal hobbies. They can include some personal trips or games. You need to respect each other's need and uniqueness.

9. **Settle the dispute before it gets worsened. St. Paul warn is Ephesians 4:26, “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun set on your anger.”** Just because you love each other, doesn't mean that there cannot be any dispute arising between you. Dispute and differences are common; but it depends how you solve them. If you have a generous mind and love you can solve them even in the living room itself, instead of taking it to the bed room.

When you have children give them due care and importance. As you find time together give enough time to children's need and activities. They should know that you love and care for them. If you have time for them, they will have time for you in your old age. Thus together with your spouse and children you will make a heaven on earth and that will be your beautiful family life and married life.

Finally remember, a family prays together stays together. You need faith in God and teach the children the same. No doubt, you will be the happiest family.