

THE FEAST OF HOLY FAMILY; Cycle – B; 2023
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Colossians 3: 12-21; Luke 2:22-40

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Once a social science teacher came to his eight grade class with the map of the country and displayed it before the students for couple minutes. And then, to their surprise, he tore it into pieces and spread them on the table. Then he invited a few students to arrange the pieces together and remake the map. Though the students tried to put the pieces together, they could not get the right piece at the right place. So the teacher asked the students to turn the other side of each piece and look what picture they could see there. The students figured out that it was the picture of a house. It was easy for them to put the pieces of the house together and by that time, without their knowledge, on the other side the map of the country was formed automatically. Thus the teacher taught a big lesson to his students that **if the house which represents the family can be fixed well, automatically the nation will come out in good shape.**

The sociologists admit without any hesitation that the very strength of a nation is not founded on the number of its nuclear weapons, warships, warplanes, infra-structure and strong economy; rather the very life nerve of a nation is the healthy families. The happy family life is the power of a nation. To destroy a nation, no nuclear weapons are needed; it is enough to attack the family values. **So the nation that does not protect the families and acknowledge and respect the sacredness of marriage, will eventually dig its own grave.**

Every year on the following Sunday of Christmas we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. Today's three readings spread light to the good family life. Many get a little upset over the idea of considering the Holy Family's life to be an ideal for the modern families. We have the impression that after all, by the very fact that the **family of Mary and Joseph was Holy**, everything was a cake walk for them. Of course, it is hard to compare the modern sophisticated family with a family that lived more than 2000 years ago in a different culture.

Does the modern family have anything common with Mary and Joseph? If we have a close look at the family problems of Mary and Joseph, we know that they are the challenges of modern age too. Mary and Joseph family life started with the initial misunderstanding over the integrity of Mary. Thereafter, the incidents which followed were not very helpful for the peaceful settling of a family. The long journey to Bethlehem; the fear of threat from Herod; the long journey to Egypt and

coming back to settle down again in Nazareth were very disturbing. In the modern families too we see different challenges and struggles? But in all their trials the mutual love or the conjugal love of Mary and Joseph kept them together. Today if millions of ideal families are found in the world, it is due to the mutual love and sacrifice the couples make for each other to protect their married life. For the very foundation of a good married life rests on the selfless love, fidelity and self sacrifice couples maintain among them.

A happy and ideal family is the real heaven on earth. Many of you are born in big families, with many children and relatives. The siblings supported and helped each other to grow. The grandparents had a big role to play in your lives. Unfortunately, modern families are very small in number of children. Naturally, in the families there isn't much interaction going on. The biggest threat for the modern family is the self-centeredness of the partners which eventually will reflect on the children too. **Even after being united in marriage the 'I' 'me' and 'mine' mentality remains with the partners. So they do not compromise and sacrifice for one another. When the couples live for oneself, instead for one another, there can be no love existing between them. When the couple thinks in terms of 'We,' there will be happiness in the family life.**

The Book of Sirach specifically points out the role of father, mother and children in making the family life a success. St. Paul emphasizes the need of compassion, patience and forgiveness to make the married life a happy one. The importance of family life cannot be overstated or overemphasized. **A good family can be an ideal formation house where we discover what it means to be human; what are our strengths and weaknesses; where we experience love and forgiveness; where we learn about relationships, unity, sacrifice, loving others, accepting others; where we learn values and attitudes and trust and how to handle stress and how to be responsible.** Family is where good citizens of the nation and the Kingdom of God are formed; a nation that stands for values is the reflection of good family life; a vibrant community is the product of good family life existing in that community.