

Holy Family

SAINT OF THE DAY

31_12_2023



"Christmas has already shown us the Holy Family gathered in the grotto at Bethlehem, but today we are invited to contemplate it in the small house at Nazareth, where Mary and Joseph are committed to raising the boy Jesus day after day. We can easily imagine this family, as artists have often done, in a thousand situations and attitudes, with the Holy Virgin next to her Child in the foreground, or good Saint Joseph in the carpenter's shop where the boy, while playing, is also learning human work". So the words of Fr. Antonio Maria Sicari help us present the great mystery celebrated today, the Holy

Family: a kind of Northern Star pointing to the eternal salvation and bliss that Jesus offered us when he became flesh in the fullness of time, by choosing an actual family to enter the history of man.

But how can the Holy Family present itself as a lifestyle model for families today? Quoting Fr. Sicari again: "We may also realise what prodigious event takes place in Nazareth: to be able to love God and love one's neighbour through one indivisible action! To Mary and Joseph, in fact, the Child is both their God and their beloved neighbour. It was therefore in Nazareth that the most sacred actions (to pray, to dialogue with God, to listen to his Word, to enter into communion with Him) coincided with the ordinary colloquial expressions that every mother and father would address to their child. It was in Nazareth that the "acts of worship due to God" (the same ones that, in the meantime, were being celebrated in the great temple of Jerusalem) coincided with the ordinary care by which Mary dressed the Child Jesus, washed him, fed him, played with him. It was then that the history of all Christian families began, where everything (affection, events, the stuff of life) can be experienced as a sacrament: the concrete sign and anticipation of an Infinite love".

The Holy Family, therefore, fulfils to the highest degree the two commandments of love, on which "the whole Law and the Prophets depend" (*Mt 22: 40*). Jesus (the Son of God and uncreated Creator), Mary (the first believer in Him) and Joseph (the first devotee of Mary) indicate that the family is an image of the Holy Trinity and, to reflect this image, is called to place God at the centre. Mary and Joseph, the highest examples for every mother and father on this earth, were the first to worship the incarnate Word – that divine Child, in turn an example for every child, who grew *in wisdom, age and grace (Lk 2: 52)* through obedience to his parents – and by adoring him they sanctified their every day, powerfully increasing their ability to love. As the Venerable Fulton Sheen said in a splendid catechesis addressed to the spouses: *"May the example of Mary and Joseph help you understand that the biggest mistake of a married couple is to believe that only two people are needed for marriage: him and her. No! Three are needed: him, her and God"*.

Because the family, founded from eternity on the indissoluble union between a man and a woman, is the primary place for transmitting the faith, as a true small domestic church, it is understandable that the devil wants to destroy it and that its attacks are intensifying (e.g., with the culture that produced the laws on divorce, abortion, artificial insemination, gay unions, euthanasia, etc.), to fulfil what the late Cardinal Carlo Caffarra effectively defined an "anti-creation". As Sister Lucy of Fatima

predicted around 1983-84 in a signed letter to Caffarra: "Father, there will come a time when the decisive battle between the kingdom of Christ and Satan will be on marriage and the family. And those who work for the good of the family will experience persecution and tribulation. But we must not be afraid, because Our Lady has already crushed its head".

Prayer, especially the family Rosary, is, together with fasting, the great weapon that God has left us to win our spiritual fight. And, given that the life of every Christian has to be entrusted to the three persons of the Holy Family, we would like to conclude with an ancient and simple prayer that can be recited at the beginning and at the end of each day: "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and soul".