



The Holy See

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 31 December 2023

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The Gospel shows them to us in the temple of Jerusalem for the presentation of the Baby to the Lord (cf. *Lk 2:22-40*). [The Holy Family] arrives in the temple bearing the humblest and simplest among the prescribed offerings as a gift, a testimony to their poverty. In the end, Mary receives a prophecy: “And a sword will pierce through your own soul” (v. 35). They arrive in poverty, and set out again loaded with suffering. This is surprising — but how is it that Jesus’ Family, the only family in history who can boast the presence of God in flesh and blood within it, be poor instead of rich! Rather than having things easy, it seems that this family meets obstacles! Instead of being free from hardship, it is immersed in tremendous sorrows!

What does this way of living, the story of the Holy Family, poor, faced with obstacles and great sorrow, tell our families? It tells us something very beautiful: God, whom we often imagine to be beyond problems, came to live in our life and its problems. This is how he came to us. He did not come as a fully grown adult, but very little. He lived in a family, as the son of a mother and father. He spent most of his time there, growing, learning, in a life made up of ordinariness, hiddenness and silence. And he did not avoid difficulties. Rather, by choosing a family, a family that was “expert in suffering”, he says this to our families: “If you are facing difficulties, I know what you are

experiencing. I experienced it. I, my mother and my father, we experienced it so we could say to your family too: You are not alone”!

Joseph and Mary “marvelled at what was said about [Jesus]” (cf. *Lk* 2:33) because they never thought that the elderly Simeon and the prophetess Anna would say these things. They marvelled. I want to reflect on this today, on their ability to marvel. Being able to marvel is a secret for moving forward well as a family, not getting used to the ordinariness of things; knowing instead how to marvel at God who accompanies us. And then marvelling in our families. I think it is good for couples to know how to marvel at one’s own spouse, taking him or her by the hand, for example, and looking the other tenderly in the eyes for a few seconds in the evening. Marvelling always leads to tenderness. Tenderness in a marriage is beautiful. And then, to marvel at the miracle of life, of children, taking time to play with them and to listen to them. I ask you, fathers and mothers: Do you find time to play with your children? To take them for a walk? Yesterday, I heard from someone on the telephone, and I asked her: “Where are you?” “Oh, I’m in the park. I took my children for a walk”. This is good parenting. And then, to marvel at the wisdom of grandparents. We often shut grandparents out of our lives. No: grandparents are a source of wisdom. Let us learn how to marvel at the wisdom of our grandparents, at their stories. Grandparents bring life back to what is essential. Lastly, to marvel at our own story of love — each of us has our own, and the Lord made us walk in love — to marvel at this. Our lives certainly have negative aspects. But also marvelling at God’s kindness in walking with us, even though we are not such experts at it.

May Mary, Queen of the family, help us marvel. Today, let us ask for the grace of being able to marvel. May Our Lady help us to be marvelled at what is good every day, and to know how to teach others the beauty of marvelling.

After praying the Angelus the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, unfortunately, Christmas celebrations in Nigeria were marred by serious violence in the State of Plateau, with many victims. I am praying for them and their families. May God free Nigeria from these atrocities! And I am also praying for all those who lost their lives in the explosion of a tanker truck in Liberia.

Let us continue to pray for people who are suffering because of war: the martyred people of Ukraine, the people of Palestine and Israel, the people of Sudan and many others. At the end of the year, let us have the courage to ask ourselves: How many human lives have been broken by armed conflict? How many dead? And how much destruction, suffering, poverty? May those who have interests in these conflicts listen to the voice of their conscience. And let us not forget the beleaguered Rohingya!

One year ago, Pope Benedict xvi ended his earthly journey, after having lovingly and wisely served the Church. We feel so much affection, gratitude and admiration for him. He blesses and accompanies us from Heaven. A round of applause for Benedict xvi! I greet all the people from Rome, the pilgrims, parish groups, associations and young people. Today, I extend a particular greeting to all the families here and those connected via television and other means of communication. Let us not forget that the family is the basic cell of society: it must always be defended and sustained, always!

I greet the Italian national men's under-18 volleyball team, and I greet the "figures" of the live Nativity Scene from Marcellano in Umbria.

And I wish everyone a happy Sunday — a blessing to your families! And I also wish you a serene end of year. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*