



Bringing Home the Word

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
December 27, 2015

Instinctively Responding

By Janel Esker

When I was in junior high, my mother was mugged as we left our local library. A man came out of nowhere, grabbed her purse, knocked her down, and ran. I was paralyzed with fear until I heard my mother yell, “Janel, get him!” With no hesitation or realization that this man might have a weapon, I took off after him. I got fairly close before I heard my mom screaming for me.

When I got back, she was terrified. She had actually screamed, “Someone, get him!” but that’s not what I’d heard. My instinct was to heed my mother’s words even if doing so made no sense.

We see Jesus in the Gospel doing something that makes no sense to his parents—something that wouldn’t make sense to most parents. Losing your child is every parent’s nightmare, and I can’t imagine the worry Mary and Joseph felt when they realized Jesus had stayed behind in the Temple.

However, Jesus was responding to his Father’s voice—he had an instinctual connection to his Father’s will, and he followed without question. But realizing the anxiety his actions had inadvertently caused his parents, he went home and lived obediently with them until he was grown.

We may not have been conceived without sin, but that doesn’t keep us from nurturing holiness in our families. We belong first to God, so we need to deepen our instinctual response to God’s call just as Jesus did. When we’re first rooted in right relationship with God, we’re able to more clearly see our family members’ needs and how we can respond to those needs in love.

That’s what a “holy family” looks like. †

A Word From Pope Francis



We need simplicity to pray as a family: simplicity is necessary!

Praying the Our Father together, around the table, is not something extraordinary: it’s easy. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength! And also praying for one another! The husband for his wife, the wife for her husband, both together for their children, the children for their grandparents...praying for each other. This is what it means to pray in the family and it is what makes the family strong: prayer.

—Homily for the family day, October 27, 2013

Sunday Readings

Sirach 3:2–6, 12–14

“The Lord sets a father in honor over his children....Those who honor their father atone for sins.”

Colossians 3:12–21

“Over all these put on love...and let the peace of Christ control your hearts.”

Luke 2:41–52

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers.”



Lord, you teach me the importance of family life. Keep my family in peace and deepen my love, respect, and appreciation for all the members of my family.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

Evangelization: Transforming the Church

By Fr. Rick Potts, CSsR

“We are fishers of men,
not keepers of the aquarium.”

When I stumbled upon this quote, I immediately placed it on my refrigerator door. Its truth calls us to focus on the big picture. The work of the Church is bringing Christ to real men, women, and children with specific needs. If we neglect this, we do not protect and promote life, and little else matters. Living this and other Christian values, especially within the family, is something we are called to do every day.

During the Rite of Baptism, infants are anointed as members “of Christ, who is Priest, Prophet, and King.” This reminds us that our core tasks are to sanctify God’s people, preach the word of God, and lead the world by example. January is a popular time to look back, evaluate, recommit, and resolve. Even though we may not keep every resolution, we continue in faith, hope, and love.

Let the questions below guide you into the future, aligning your words and actions with the will and words of our Lord.

Priest (*Sanctify*)

- Jesus said, “Come and follow me.” Do my family and I inspire each other to serve the Lord, perhaps through a religious vocation?



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- What am I teaching my children about God and life?
- How do we pray as a family?

- How do my family and I care for the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and set the captives free?
- What would Jesus, the Good Shepherd, say about our efforts to retrieve fallen-away sisters and brothers?
- Do we, like Jesus, dine with and offer our home to sinners?

Prophet (*Preach*)

- Would Jesus hear words of inspiration and joy in our home?

- What kind of Catholic literature and media do I consume and provide to my family?
- What would Jesus say about my efforts to educate others in the faith, especially my own children?

King (*Lead*)

- What does my stewardship, spending habits, and budget say about my family’s priorities, wealth, the value of life, and the rights of workers?
- How do we answer God’s call to unity and sacrificial love when it comes to race, language, and economic status?
- How do our words, actions, and choices reflect Jesus’ stance on relating to other churches, religions, faiths, and nations?
- What would Jesus, the Prince of Peace, say about violence, killing, and wars fought in the name of God?

To end on a positive note, also ask yourself, “What about my family would make Jesus the proudest? Of what would he brag to his Father?”

I realize that without a clean aquarium, fish do not survive. But for evangelization and formation to be effective, the Church—that’s you, me, and all the baptized—needs to focus on the right priorities. It’s easy to lose sight of what’s important.

Take this opportunity to review your baptismal promises and create some annual resolutions for yourself and your family. What might your lives, and even the community, look like if you evaluated yourselves not on the number of prayers, empty Advent calendars, crucifixes, or candles, but on how well you preach, teach, and sanctify anyone you encounter?

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 28 –
January 2

Mon. *Holy Innocents:*
I John 1:5–2:2 / Matthew 2:13–18

Tue. *Fifth Day within the Octave of Christmas:*
I John 2:3–11 / Luke 2:22–35

Wed. *Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas:*
I John 2:12–17 / Luke 2:36–40

Thu. *Seventh Day within the Octave of Christmas:*
I John 2:18–21 / John 1:1–18

Fri. *Mary, Holy Mother of God: Numbers 6:22–27*
/ Galatians 4:4–7 / Luke 2:16–21

Sat. *Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen:*
I John 2:22–28 / John 1:19–28