

Homily for the Feast of the Holy Family

[Sir. 3:2-6, 12-4; Col. 3:12-21; Mt. 2:13-5, 19-23]

Pope Francis – *Angelus* of 29 décembre 2019

by Father Charles Fillion

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Brothers and sisters, today is a beautiful day as we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth. The term “holy” places this family within the sphere of holiness which is a gift from God but, at the same time, is free and responsible adherence to God’s plan. This was the case for the family of Nazareth: they were totally available to God’s will. How can we not wonder, for example, at Mary’s acceptance to the action of the Holy Spirit who asks her to become the mother of the Messiah? Because Mary, like every young woman of her time, was about to realize her life project, that is, to marry Joseph.

But when she realises that God is calling her to a particular mission, she does not hesitate to proclaim herself His “servant” (cf. *Lk* 1: 38). Jesus will exalt her greatness not so much for her role as a mother, but for her obedience to God. Jesus said: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it” (*Lk* 11: 28), like Mary. And when she does not fully understand the events that involve her, Mary meditates in silence, reflects and respects the divine initiative. Her presence at the foot of the cross consecrates this total willingness.

Then regarding Joseph, the Gospel does not give us a single word: he does not speak, but he acts, obeying. He is the man of silence, the man of obedience. Today’s Gospel reading recalls this obedience of the righteous Joseph three times, referring to the flight to Egypt and the return to the land of Israel. Under God’s guidance, represented by the Angel, Joseph takes his family away from Herod’s threats, and saves them. The Holy Family is therefore in solidarity with all the families of the world forced into exile, in solidarity with all those who are compelled to abandon their own land due to repression, violence, and war.

Finally, the third person of the Holy Family, Jesus. He is the will of the Father: in Him, says Saint Paul, there was no “yes” and “no”, but only “yes” (cf. *2 Cor* 1: 19). And this is made manifest in many moments of His earthly life. For example, the episode at the temple when He responded to the anguished parents who sought Him out: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (*Lk* 2: 49); His continual repetition: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work” (*Jn* 4: 34); His prayer in the Mount of Olives: “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done” (*Mt* 26: 42). All these events are the perfect realisation of the very words of Christ who says: “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired [...] ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book’” (*Heb* 10: 5-7; *Psalms* 40: 7-9).

Mary, Joseph, Jesus: the Holy Family of Nazareth which represents a vocal response to the will of the Father: the three members of this family help each other mutually to discover God's plan. They prayed, worked, communicated. In your family, do you know how to communicate or are you like those kids at the table, each one with their mobile phone, while they are chatting? At that table there seems to be a silence as if they were at Mass... But they do not communicate between themselves. We must resume dialogue in the family: fathers, parents, children, grandparents and siblings must communicate with one another ... This is today's homework, right on the day of the Holy Family.

May the Holy Family be a model for our families, so that parents and children may support each other mutually in obedience to the Gospel, the basis of the holiness of the family.

Let us entrust to Mary, "Queen of the Family", all the families in the world, especially those who suffer or who are in distress, and invoke upon them her maternal protection.